



The Ministry of National Security
Commonwealth of The Bahamas

The Honourable Wayne R. Munroe, Q.C., M.P.

Minister of National Security

2022-2023 National Budget Debate Contribution

to

The House of Assembly

Tuesday, 7th June, 2022

Afternoon Session

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madam Speaker,

I deem it an absolute privilege to rise in this Honourable House as I fulfill my statutory obligation to report on the status of safety and security to the Bahamian people.

As you are aware, Madam Speaker, safety and security encompasses many factors and the safety of a nation is directly linked to ensuring human security.

This reflects a people-centred approach to safety and security and one which

acknowledges that all Bahamians are entitled to live without the fear of crime and violence.

Madam Speaker,

Our leader, the Honourable Philip Davis, in his first full budget presentation has a human centred approach. The ultimate goal is for all within our borders to have an equal opportunity to enjoy all of their rights, as guaranteed in the Constitution, and fully develop their God given potentials.

Madam Speaker,

I am always thankful for having the gift of life. It is only through the grace of God that I rise every morning. Madam Speaker, a good Member of Parliament not only has to give of his time and labour; he also has to sacrifice his family time too.

Hence, I am also eternally grateful for the support of my dear wife, Dorothea and my children, Ashley, Wayne, Richard, Meagan, Zion, Isiah and John. They are the source of my strength and the bedrock of my family.

Madam Speaker,

I am also humbled because each time I rise in this Honourable House, I do so as the Member of Parliament for the Freetown Constituency. I am still appreciative that our leader, the Honourable Philip 'Brave' Davis, selected me to serve as a member of his Cabinet and in the capacity as Minister of National Security.

I fully appreciate and embrace this Davis-Cooper first full national budget presentation because it provides the opportunity to highlight this Administration's priorities. I understand that

Government budgeting is important because it allows this Administration to plan and manage the financial resources of this nation to support various programmes and projects focused on three areas inclusive of:

- assisting Bahamians cope with the cost-of-living;
- growing our economy, while ensuring that Bahamians have the necessary education and training they need to take advantage of new opportunities; and
- security of the property and the person; all of which will promote the development of our people and this nation.

Madam Speaker,

This budget is reflective of our Prime Minister, the Honourable Philip Davis. He is a man of the people; he is a man from the Family-Islands; Cat Island, to be exact. This budget reflects this Administration's *'Blueprint for Change'*. More importantly, it reflects the values and policies we have for the people of this nation.

Madam Speaker,

During our almost nine months in Office, we have been able to assess the previous trajectory of this nation. We understood that our nation

was facing some of its greatest challenges. The worst economic crisis and health crisis were simultaneous once in a lifetime events.

Hurricane Dorian in 2019 resulted in the second and third largest economies in The Bahamas being hit with a catastrophic Category 5 Hurricane.

To date, it is the most intense tropical cyclone on record and the worst natural disaster to make landfall in The Bahamas. The damages were estimated to be more than **\$5 billion dollars.**

Just off the heels of Dorian came COVID-19 which is considered the worst health crisis that triggered an even worst economic crisis for The Bahamas and, by extension, the world. Both the hurricane and COVID-19 pandemic have been key determinants of the nation's economic performance since late 2019.

Madam Speaker,

Consequently, the double blow resulted in severe economic losses in both Grand Bahama and Abaco. COVID further compounded the problem with dire consequences on the entire

archipelago which resulted in a high infectious rates and mass unemployment attributed to the drastic contraction of the tourism sector and indirect effects on other sectors.

Madam Speaker,

The true measure of a good Government is its ability to respond to a crisis. As simple as it may seem, it's a very precious commodity that, if mishandled, has severe consequence on those whom it was meant to serve - the Bahamian people.

Both the responses to Dorian and COVID-19 revealed the cracks in the FNM's ability to inter-relate with the Bahamian people and provide the required level of good governance.

Madam Speaker,

Good governance is crucial in responding to crises. This Davis-Cooper Administration was elected on a 10 Points Plan, as outlined in our *'Blueprint for Change'*. The Plan serves to recover, rebuild and revolutionize the economy to foster a more resilient Bahamas.

This began with a series of policy changes, in consultation with multi-disciplinary experts, inclusive of:

- Ending the Emergency Orders;
- Reopening the economy and allowing persons to return to work;
- Compensation for our health-care workers, teachers and other civil servants;
- Paying over \$6.8 million dollars to persons impacted by COVID-19 work related restrictions; and
- Introducing new COVID-19 testing protocols and increased healthcare providers.

Madam Speaker,

The reality of hardships being faced by our

citizens in the northern Bahamas and throughout the archipelago are real. Against an already tempestuous backdrop of post-Dorian and a global health crisis, which resulted in disruption to the food supply chains and rising food and energy costs.

To compound the problem, on the 24th February, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and this has exacerbated the supply and demand chain and, it is threatening further global economic growth.

Madam Speaker,

Building-off our initial response to Dorian, COVID and the ongoing war in Ukraine, this budget was designed to assist Bahamians **NOW**. It seeks to strengthen our healthcare system, bring economic relief; restore faith in Government; and bringing about happiness and hope.

Madam Speaker, this 2022/2023 National Budget charts the way forward. This budget reflects a coordinated national response that underscores this Administration's willingness

and capacity to address the challenges of this nation with the humanness of good governance underscoring our national priorities.

The economic policy of this Administration has centred on containing the economic lost from Dorian, while stimulating the impact from COVID-19, cushioning the effects on citizens from the war in Ukraine and building a platform for growth after the pandemic.

That, Madam Speaker, is good governance!

That Madam Speaker, is a Davis-Cooper

Administration.

Madam Speaker,

According to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, human needs dictate individuals' behaviours. It proposes that humans are motivated by their basic needs which must first be satisfied. Persons can only progress to higher-level needs when their basic needs are adequately satisfied.

The most basic needs for human survival includes food, water, shelter and overall health.

Madam Speaker, next among the lower-level needs is safety which includes protection from violence, promoting emotional stability, health security and financial security.

Madam Speaker,

This Davis-Cooper Administration's 2022/2023 National Budget is undergirded with meeting the basic human needs of our citizens. It's about the Bahamian people! The three-pronged approach firstly focuses assisting Bahamians meet their basic need for food security, clothing and housing needs, and providing access to digital

technologies to ensure there is equitable access throughout our archipelago.

Madam Speaker,

The Administration is aware of the inherent value of education and it's imperative that we find feasible and strategic ways to communicate its value and empower our citizens to embrace it.

The PLP Government has always regarded the education of its citizens as a fundamental right and one which would facilitate their sustainable

growth, while providing an indispensable means to effectively participate in the country's national development.

Under a PLP led Administration in 2015, the nation hosted the 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. It was at that time delegates were reminded that "...education should be the centre of resilience..."

Furthermore, "every vulnerability has a resilient response". This 2022/2023 National Budget

focuses on education and training as fundamental tools to advance our national development and strengthen our resilience as a people.

Madam Speaker,

The final priority focuses on safety, security and justice. I should note that safety and justice partially overlap and include citizens, civil society and Government in partnership.

Together, and in partnership, the values and goals of freedom, equity and personal safety, as

well as, the national institutions charged with delivering them are key components. Madam Speaker, as officials elected by the Bahamian people, we have an obligation to be on the forefront and mindful of the people we were elected to serve.

Madam Speaker,

For a select few, we have been entrusted with Ministries, Departments and other Government agencies charged with providing services to the citizens of The Bahamas. To date, I am still humbled and privileged to serve in the Cabinet

of The Bahamas as the Minister of National Security.

As I have said before, “I am a creature of instructions”. I have been charged with directing this Administration’s policy and decision-making on national issues relative to safety and security.

Priority three of the recovery, rebuilding and resilience budget falls under my purview - security. I hold true to Romans Chapter 12 verse 13, which states “contribute to the needs

of God's people..." I remain committed to advancing this Administration's agenda relative to promoting law enforcement, modernizing our electoral process, and devising feasible policies and programmes to deter our youth from a life of crime and violence.

Madam Speaker,

My goal is best stated in Galatians Chapter 6 verse 2 states, "carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ". I desire to foster a nation where Bahamians can work, live and play in a safe and secure environment that

will allow their talents to flourish. My contribution today underscores my burden to provide a safe environment for all Bahamians.

Madam Speaker,

I now turn to my substantive contribution to the 2022/2023 Budget Debate.

Madam Speaker,

The Davis-Cooper Administration places a high priority on national safety and security as it is viewed as one of our fundamental duties. In an effort to meet the demands of the 21st century,

this budget allows my Ministry to strengthen the law enforcement agencies under remit. The goal is to ensure they are more strategic in managing the affairs of safety and security. I also desire to advance justice and facilitate a modern electoral process.

Madam Speaker,

It is my honour to lead the Ministry of National Security and the agencies and institutions which are central to the advancement of our safety, security, justice and democratic principles. The entities under my remit include the Parliamentary

Registration Department, Trafficking in Persons (TIPS), the National Neighbourhood Watch Council (NNWC), the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (NADS) and the Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP).

In addition, under remit are three of the uniform branches inclusive of the Royal Bahamas Police Force (RBPF), the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) and the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDOCS). At this time, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank all personnel in the aforementioned for their

dedication and commitment to the advancement of this nation.

Madam Speaker,

The proposed expenditure for the Ministry of National Security and the agencies under its remit for the 2022/2023 fiscal year is **two hundred and sixty-four million, four hundred and sixty-four thousand, one hundred and forty-nine dollars (\$264,464,149).**

This reflects a **three point seven (3.7) percent increase** from last year's budget of **two**

hundred and fifty-five million, six hundred and fourteen thousand, eight hundred and fifty-eight dollars (\$255,614,858).

Of the total amount, Madam Speaker, **two hundred and thirty-five million, six hundred and eighty-seven thousand, two hundred and eighty-nine dollars (\$235,687,289)** was allocated for cumulative recurrent expenditure.

Meanwhile, **twenty-eight million, seven hundred and seventy-six thousand, eight**

hundred and sixty dollars (\$28,776,860) was allocated for cumulative capital expenditure.

Madam Speaker,

For the 2022/2023 fiscal year, my Ministry has been allocated:

Cumulative Expenditure - **\$29,615,871**

Recurrent Expenditure
2022/2023 - \$15,489,011

Capital Expenditure
2022/2023 - \$14,126,860

Madam Speaker,

Here are the recurrent and capital expenditures for the agencies under my purview.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force

Recurrent Expenditure

2022/2023 - \$125,299,313

Capital expenditure will be included in my Ministry's budget.

The Royal Bahamas Defense Force

Recurrent Expenditure

2022/2023 - \$62,076,141

Capital Expenditure
2022/2023 - \$14,650,000

The Bahamas Department of Corrections

Recurrent Expenditure
2022/2023 - \$31,646,404

Capital expenditure will be included in my
Ministry's budget.

Parliamentary Registration Department-

Recurrent Expenditures
2022/2023 - \$1,176,420

Capital expenditure will be included in my
Ministry's budget.

Madam Speaker,

As noted by our Prime Minister in his communication, this Administration takes the safety and security of all within our border serious. A closer examination of this year's budget will reflect:

- There are no human capital cuts or reductions in my Ministry and the agencies under remit;
- My Ministry and the law enforcement agencies under remit, taking into consideration the reduction in select line items, were allocated budgetary increases; and
- Allocations have been made for the recruitment of Officers for the Department of

Corrections and Police Force and Marines for the Defence Force, respectively.

Madam Speaker,

This Davis-Cooper Administration has seen it fit to apply common-sense budgetary practices.

This fiscal cycle will result in food, ice, and drinking water for my Ministry and the agencies under remit now being centrally purchased which reflects decreases for this line item.

To understand the magnitude of this decision, I refer to the Department of Corrections. For the upcoming fiscal year, the Department costs for

food, ice, and drinking water will be reduced from over \$1.9 million dollars, as was for the 2021/2022 budget, to \$10,000 for the 2022/2023 budget cycle.

Of particular interests, there will be the central purchasing of animal food for the respective Canine Units. Thus, the allocation reflects zero and will result in cost-saving measures for the Government. Madam Speaker, the centralized purchasing of items will result in overall savings which will translate into efficiency, and improved

collaboration between the various Ministries and Departments.

Madam Speaker,

I now shift my attention to the agencies under my purview.

The Royal Bahamas Police Force

Madam Speaker,

The Royal Bahamas Police Force is the agency responsible for the maintenance of law and order. For the 2022/2023 fiscal cycle, the agency has been allocated **one hundred and twenty-five million, two hundred and ninety-nine**

thousand, three hundred and thirteen dollars (\$125,299,313) for recurrent expenditure. All capital expenditure will be allocated under my Ministry's budget.

Madam Speaker,

In our first full budget presentation, this Administration wanted to ensure the adequate management of the safety and security sector.

Our goal is to ensure that our policies and priorities are in alignment with democratic best practices, ensure consistency with the rules of

law and ensure that the provision of safety and security is managed in the interest of the public's good and not a select few.

As the Ministry responsible for safety, we bear the political responsibility for the activities of the sector. Hence, consideration is given to extensive policies and management structures to ensure that the applicable policies and practices are transparent and accountable to the Bahamian people.

Madam Speaker,

Our Administration's commitments to tackling crime were well articulated in our '*Blueprint for Change*' and include:

- Introducing research- based analysis and policies on countering anti-social behaviour, violence and crime; and
- Increasing investment in the Community Policing Unit for community policing throughout The Bahamas.

To complement, the Commissioner's Policing Plan serves to reflect the way forward with continued investments in technologies, professional development training for

employees, succession planning, multi-disciplinary recruitment and improved community relations with the public.

Madam Speaker,

The Police Force last week hosted the 36th Annual General Meeting of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP) in The Bahamas for the first time. Over the course of the week, the Commissioners and experts in the safety and security field discussed the status of safety and security in their respective countries.

Like our regional counterparts, there has been a high rate of violence, particularly homicides committed with firearms. The trends have been attributed to the narrowing economic and educational opportunities that have worsen due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, for the period the 1st January to 31st May, 2022 statistics released by the Police Force indicated an increase of major crimes from 1,580 incidents in 2021 to 1,872 incidents for the same period in 2022. This reflected an overall 18 percent increase for the entire Bahamas.

It should be noted that the statistics were attributed to an increase in incidences on both New Providence and Grand Bahama. The former had a 25 percent increase and the latter a 5 percent increase, respectively. Meanwhile, there was a 23 percent decrease in crimes on the Family Islands when compared to 2021.

Madam Speaker,

The increased incidents in crime occurred mainly in crimes against the person which rose by 45 percent compared to the same period in 2021.

There were 508 incidents, thus far for the year, compared to 351 incidents in 2021.

This translated into increases on New Providence and Grand Bahama with 49 percent and 33 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, there was a 23 percent decrease in crimes against the person on the Family Islands.

Madam Speaker,

For the period the 1st January to 31st May, 2022 statistics included that there was an increase in crimes against the property as 1,364 incidents

were reported compared to 1,229 incidents in 2021 for the same period. This translated into increases on New Providence and Grand Bahama with 17 percent and 1 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, there was a 20 percent decrease in crimes against the property on the Family Islands.

Madam Speaker,

Murder, drugs and weapons have a direct correlation to the increases in our crime statistics. The Police Force has shared that there is still ongoing turf war over territory, drugs

and guns on our streets. This senseless activity has resulted in an increase of homicides by 26 percent when compared to last year.

There were 58 incidents compared to 46 in 2021, of which, 54 murders occurred in New Providence and 4 in Grand Bahama. Victimology revealed that 59 percent of the deceased were persons between ages 18 year to 35 years. Retaliation and conflict were the most common motives for murder representing 45 percent, collectively.

Madam Speaker,

For the reporting period, ShotSpotter detected 296 gunshot incidents, consisting of 207 multiple shots, 76 single shots and 13 probable shot incidents, totaling 1,167 rounds discharged. Accordingly, 419 shell casings were collected and 8 rounds of ammunition were seized.

From the aforementioned, 10 suspects were apprehended in connection with the police response to gunshot reports and ShotSpotter detections. To complement, there was seizure of 173 firearms and 2,715 rounds of ammunition.

In addition, for the reporting period, 511 lbs. of cocaine and 5,178 lbs. of marijuana were taken off our streets. These seizures along with the interdiction of other illicit drugs types resulted in 543 persons being arrested, of which, 427 persons were charged with related offences.

Madam Speaker,

While the statistics are disturbing, our research suggests that the trafficking of illegal firearms and ammunition by transnational criminal organizations and the sale by local gangs results in easy access to weapons by criminal elements

in our nation. It is important to note that The Bahamas doesn't manufacture guns, ammunition nor drugs.

All of the above are flowing from North America and South America, particularly from the United States and Venezuela. Most of the weapons being seized are coming from North America. Hence, we will continue to working hand-in-hand with our U.S. and regional counterparts to rid our streets of illicit firearms and drugs.

Madam Speaker,

In the new fiscal year, my Ministry will invest in modern information technology solutions. Research suggests that most criminals, particularly transnational networks, utilize technologies to carry out their nefarious activities.

To counteract the same, law enforcement must use the same technologies to combat modern crimes. The lists of technologies my Ministry's investment in the Police Force will include:

Electronic Monitoring
Madam Speaker,

My Ministry awarded a new contract to Metro Security Services in September 2021 for three (3) years. Madam Speaker, it should be noted that the previous contract expired two years ago, yet the then Administration continued with no proper contractual agreement.

However, under the new agreement, beginning in November 2021 the transition resulted in the onboarding of new persons. The total value of the three (3) years contract is **seven million, six**

hundred and three thousand, six hundred and eighty dollars (\$7,603,680).

Madam Speaker,

Under the previous agreement the police had to expend resources responding to breaches and false signals. During these times, this meant that Officers were taken away from other policing duties. With this new agreement, Metro will now provide two (2) surveillance vehicles to respond to breaches and false signals.

To complement this agreement, the Police Staff Association will work in conjunction with Metro to

use off-duty Officers to respond to breaches and false signaling. Again, Madam Speaker, this is a cost saving measure for the Government and greater value for money.

For the new fiscal year, my Ministry will allocate **three million, four hundred thousand dollars (\$3,400,000)** for the electronic monitoring of persons. Madam Speaker, this shift in vendor will result in a 12.5 percent savings or **four hundred and eighty-seven thousand, two hundred and eighty dollars (\$487,280)** for the Government compared to the previous budget cycle.

Madam Speaker,

A more efficient company will allow for better surveillance of offenders who are under the police's supervision. The benefits will include monitoring and verification of offenders' whereabouts, determining new offending, increasing the likelihood that any violations of the terms of supervision will be detected and sanctions applied.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

Madam Speaker,

My Ministry will allocate **one million, nine**

hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$1,930,000) to advance the CCTV programme. From the amount, **seven hundred and fifteen thousand dollars (\$715,000)** will be expended to the Police's communication network.

An additional **one hundred and fifty-eight thousand dollars (\$158,000)** will be allocated for the Real Time Lab. This aggregation of systems will allow for greater efficiency and accuracy of real-time data.

To complement, my Ministry will also allocate

nine hundred and forty-six thousand dollars (\$946,000) to Proficient Business Solutions for maintenance of legacy one and two camera systems throughout New Providence.

Madam Speaker, when compared to the previous budget, this expenditure item reflected a less than one percent decrease or **two thousand, three hundred and four dollars (\$2,304)** savings for the Government.

ShotSpotter

Madam Speaker,

I alluded to the success that the Police is having

with ShotSpotter in its efforts to curb the flow of guns on our streets. We know that ShotSpotter helps the Police by notifying them of gunshot crimes using real-time data delivered to the Real Time Crime Centre (RTCC).

Investments in this technology is critical because research suggest that almost eight out of ten gunfire shots are unreported to the police (ShotSpotter, 2018). Of course, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members of the public to report suspected gun activity to the police. The Police are unable to effectively and

efficiently respond to gun activity, if they are unaware of an incident.

Madam Speaker,

During the next fiscal year, my Ministry will invest **eight hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars (\$835,000)** for the maintenance of the audio visual integration system. From the amount, **eighty-two thousand, two hundred and eighty-six dollars (\$82,286)** will be awarded for an audio visual contract, while **six hundred and thirty-two thousand, four**

hundred and thirty-five dollars (\$632,435) will
be for the maintenance of ShotSpotter.

Marco's Alert

Madam. Speaker,

As you are aware, on the 16th February of this year the Mandatory Action Rescuing Children Operation (MARCO's) Alert System conducted its final test. In partnership with BTC, members of the public and the media were exposed to how the system works.

Madam Speaker, the Marco's Alert was the birth child of the late Minister of National Security, the

Honourable Bernard Nottage who partnered with the family of Marco Archer to bring about legislation to protect our children.

To support the maintenance of the system, my Ministry will allocate **three hundred and fifty-one thousand, eight hundred and eighty dollars (\$351,880)** in the new fiscal year.

Body-worn and dash cameras
Madam Speaker,

Since the introduction of body-worn and dash cameras footage from these devices have aided in providing critical evidence for internal and

external investigations for the Police.

The systems have also give accurate and first-hand account of the police-citizen encounters.

To support maintenance, **two hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars (\$233,000)** will be allocated by my Ministry to support the systems.

Madam Speaker,

In September 2021, my Ministry signed a two (2) years contractual agreement with Multimedia Technologies for the Sexual Offenders Register.

The Register will serve to monitor and track sex offenders following their release from the Department of Corrections. The system provides valuable information about convicted sex offenders to the police and members of the public.

As part of maintenance for the Register, my Ministry will allocate **five hundred and eighty-eight thousand dollars (\$588,000)**. The system will ensure that the components inclusive of biometrics, information technology and tracking technology to monitor in real-time remain

constantly updated. Further, it will support an offender's ability to re-register periodically and/or check-in using select kiosks.

Madam Speaker,

The COVID-19 Enforcement Unit was established to assist the Government in its efforts to help contain the spread of COVID. Specifically, the Unit still operates on five islands including New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco, Eleuthera and Exuma.

The Unit in partnership with the police still

engage in patrols in public spaces and business establishments. The members of the COVID Unit continue to be visible and persistent, which resulted in 6,300 checks at various business establishments to ensure that all protocols were being adhered.

The Unit's patrols result in 44 citations being issued to persons found in violation of COVID rules. The equivalent dollar value for these infractions was **fifty-three thousand, five hundred and fifty dollars (\$53,550).**

Additionally, five (5) persons were arrested at LPIA for possessing of forged documents.

To continue the Government's commitment to curb the spread of COVID-19, my Ministry will allocate **two million, one hundred thousand dollars (\$2,100,000)** to support the efforts of the Unit. Again, Madam Speaker this cost reflects a 12.5 percent decrease or a savings of **three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000)**.

Again, Madam Speaker, this Davis-Cooper Administration is advancing safety and security

and making the necessary investments to ensure that our law enforcement agencies are equipped to meet the challenges of 21st law enforcement.

Madam Speaker,

To support our investments in technologies, capital investments are necessary to improve the operational capacity of the Police Force. For the new fiscal year, my Ministry will allocate **one million, six hundred and fifteen thousand dollars (\$1,615,000)** to upgrade the AS400 System, upgrade of the PBX System, the

purchase of First Responder's radio and computer equipment, satellite phones, and to replace the trunking system in Grand Bahama and Abaco.

Of the technologies, the AS400 is central to the police's operations as it integrates police activities throughout the nation. The system, though easy to use, has complex internal architecture that is able to integrate well with other technologies. Of importance to note, is the replacement of the trunking system in Grand Bahama and Abaco.

The systems needed to be replaced since being damaged from Dorian in 2019. The trunked radio system is a two-way radio system that assigned frequency channels thereby allowing the police to effectively communicate.

Madam Speaker,

For the upcoming fiscal year, my Ministry will allocate **one point five million dollars (\$1.5 million)** to renovate various police stations on New Providence and the Family Islands. Upon completion, an additional **three hundred and five thousand dollars (\$305,000)** will be

allocated to purchase furniture and furnishings for police stations.

To complement, my Ministry will allocate **four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000)** for the purchase of police vehicles to support the expanding policing services throughout the archipelago, particular on Grand Bahama and Abaco which are still in the recovery phase, post-Dorian.

Madam Speaker,

Critical to policing services are firearms and

ammunition which allows Officers to be armed while on duty. During this upcoming fiscal year, my Ministry will allocate **six hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$650,000)** to the purchase of firearms and ammunition to ensure that the Police Officers have the necessary resources to protect the community and themselves.

Madam Speaker,

Since late 2019 the Royal Bahamas Police Force has been under tremendous strain related to Hurricane Dorain followed by COVID-19. The

latter, COVID-19 had the greatest and unprecedented impact on all facets of policing.

Like its global counterparts, the Police Force calls for service were impacted; changes to its administrative and operational practices have been altered; changes to the workforce; budget constraints impacted operational practices; and illness or death associated with COVID had a significant impact on the organization's strength.

Madam Speaker,

The aforementioned organizational impact and

changes have resulted in dramatic shifts in policing in a relatively short period of time. Despite the alluded challenges, the Police Force still remains one of the most progressive Police Forces in the region. I, therefore thank the Officers and civilians who give freely of their time and talent.

Madam Speaker

The success of the Agency, is also a reflection of the Commissioner. Commissioner Rolle, the eight (8th) serving Commissioner of an independent Bahamas, will be retiring after

serving nearly four decades of impeccable service to the Royal Bahamas Police Force.

Madam Speaker,

Mr. Paul A. Rolle began his career as a police officer in May 1983. He steadily rose through the ranks of the force to become Commissioner of Police.

He is now retiring from the Police Force after having served in every rank and has made it to the top. Having been appointed Commissioner in

2020, the Royal Bahamas Police Force recorded a 16 percent overall reduction in crime.

A review of crime indicates that the deliverables targeted in his policing plan were achieved, as evidenced by the overall rate of crime remaining unchanged by the end of 2021. Albeit, there were some categories of quality of life offences that did increase.

In his quest to keep the Bahamian public safe, he heightened police visibility throughout the Commonwealth. As a crime preventative

measure, the Force under his leadership ran daily police operations targeting hotspots and prolific offenders.

Madam Speaker,

Commissioner Paul Rolle, as he retires from policing, will continue his public service in his new role as Ambassador to the International Maritime Organization.

There he will now use his experience in International Maritime to enhance The Bahamas' function in International Maritime and will sit on

the IMO Council, which is the Executive Committee of the International Maritime Organization in London. It is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.

Madam Speaker,

I thank Commissioner Paul Rolle for his service to his country. The people of Andros should be proud to know that they have a son of the soil, who has done such great feat for his country. His

legacy is written, Madam Speaker, and is indelible. I congratulate him as he prepares to take on his new role as Ambassador and we look forward to great things from him as we expand the maritime sector.

The Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF)

Madam Speaker,

I now shift my attention to the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF) which was established by the '*father of our nation*', the late Sir Lynden Pindling. The Agency continues to make invaluable contributions to guarding our

heritage, assisting with law enforcement and providing search and rescue, in conjunction with local and regional partners.

For the 2022/2023 fiscal cycle, the agency has been allocated **sixty-two million, seventy-six thousand, one hundred and forty-one dollars (\$62,076,141)** for recurrent expenditure and **fourteen million, six hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$14,650,000)** for capital.

Madam Speaker,

As outlined in our Prime Minister's contribution,

this Administration is committed to providing the necessary human capital, equipment and operational assets to enable the Agency to fulfill its mandate.

My Ministry is, therefore, steadfast on ensuring the completion of decentralization which will allow for greater operational efficiency, particularly with the complement of fully functional bases in the north, south-central and southern Bahamas. These areas pose the greatest threats from illicit drug trafficking, arms

and ammunition smuggling, human trafficking, poaching and illegal migration.

Madam Speaker,

This is even more important considering that for the 2021/2022 fiscal year there has been an increase in the number of irregular migrants apprehended. For the reporting period, January to May, 2022, 1,957 migrants were apprehended.

When compared to the year ending 2021 there were 1,644 migrants apprehended. This reflects

a 19 percent increase and we are barely half way through the year.

Madam Speaker, we understand that the socio-political and economic crises occurring in the southern Caribbean and South America is spurring the increasing rise in the number of migrants risking their lives for a better life, but it is also causing a strain on our resources.

Madam Speaker,

For the ensuing 2022/2023 fiscal year, the Defence Force have devised the following

objectives:

- Strengthened security cooperation with intra and inter agency law enforcement partners at the national, regional and international levels;
- Continuous pursuit of advanced satellite communication and detection techniques;
- Employment of a multi-layered security posture;
- Enhance maritime domain awareness through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles or drones, maritime surveillance systems such as coastal radars, surveillance and reconnaissance patrols by its aircraft;
- Intelligence driven operations; and
- Joint maritime interdiction operations

Decentralization – Gunn Point, Ragged Island
Madam Speaker,

The initiatives to decentralize the operations in the southern Bahamas, mainly Gunn Point, Ragged Island and Matthew Town, Great Inagua are ongoing.

The development of the base at Gunn Point, Ragged Island will serve as a prime facility for the Agency as it will provide the Defence Force's Bahamas Class including the 42 and 32 metres vessels and safe boats quick and easy access to the Great Bahama and Columbus Banks and

enable faster patrol times to the sea corridors around the southern islands of Acklins, Crooked Island, and Long Island.

In preparation at Gunn Point, Ragged Island the construction of the 15,000 gallons of bulk fuel storage facility is nearing completion. This fuel facility will ensure that the vessels operating in the area have the ability to refuel without having to leave the area of operations.

Meanwhile, the equipment for the Reverse Osmosis Plant is onsite and work will begin shortly to complete the installation. Upon

completion, the system will have the capacity to store 8,000 gallons of water, of which, an average of 400 gallons will be produced per day.

Matthew Town-Inagua
Madam Speaker,

The Matthew Town, Great Inagua Base was established in the mid 1990's and it is critical to the Defence Force's ability to protect our sovereignty in the south. As previously noted, many of the illegal activities plaguing our nation occur in the south and our porous border serve as an easy conduit for such activities to the take

place in the absence of a strong and sustained Defence Force presence.

As a part of the expansion, the construction of a 30,000 gallons bulk diesel fuel facility is nearing completion and will provide the fuel capacity for the Defence Force's vessels stationed and operating in the area to refuel. The fuel facility and ancillary civil works are estimated to cost **four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000).**

Madam Speaker,

To complement the ongoing capital works in

Inagua, architectural drawings and plans are being finalized for the construction of the Commanding Officer's Residence at an estimated cost of **two hundred and sixty thousand dollars (\$260,000)**.

Plans are also being finalized for the construction of similar accommodations for the Officers and Warrant Officers at an estimated cost of **two hundred and forty thousand dollars (\$240,000)**.

Coral Harbour, New Providence
Madam Speaker,

The Coral Harbour Base will also undergo capital developments including increasing the bulk diesel fuel capacity to 45,000 gallons, and it is anticipate that this work will be completed early in the upcoming budget cycle.

Additional upgrades to the Coral Harbour Base will include the purchase of state of the art Damage Control and Fire Fighting Simulators.

The simulators will cost a little more than **five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000)** and will

be erected onsite on the northern shore of the base.

The simulator will provide critical training in both firefighting and damage control for all members of the Force. The acquisition of the Firefighting and Damage Control Simulator will complement the Bridge Resource Management Simulator, previously purchased.

Madam Speaker,

Additional capital works include renovations to the ground floor of the North Gate Building which

was completed at a cost of **two hundred and eighty thousand dollars (\$280,000)**. Work was also completed on the electrification and electrical upgrades to the southern and northern shores of the base.

The work on the southern shore is nearing completion and when completed will provide the necessary shore-power supply for the vessels berthed to be connected to the Bahamas Power and Light (BPL) power grid, minimizing the need for the vessel to use their generators.

The use of the vessels generators when berthed alongside has resulted in large expenditure for the use of fuel and the need for more than **one million dollars (\$1 million)** to purchase replacement generators.

Madam Speaker,

In the upcoming fiscal year, plans are been developed to construct several new building facilities at the Coral Harbour Base including:

- A new galley and dining facility, mess facilities for both senior and junior marines;
- Armoury and Exchange;

- The construction of office facilities for the Military Police Unit, a Band Room and a gym;
- The renovations and addition of two floors to the South Gate Building;
- The demolition of the unfinished hotel which has been deemed unsafe; and
- The construction of new facilities for recruits training to include dorms, messing facilities and classroom.

The projected cost for the development at HMBS Coral Harbour is **twenty-five point five million dollars (\$25.5 million).**

Madam Speaker,

Capital works will also include the construction of

a much needed warehouse supply block and mechanical workshop on the northern shore of HMBS Coral Harbour. The supply warehouse office will replace the spaces currently used in the unfinished hotel.

The mechanical workshop will provide the facility needed for the maintenance and upkeep of the Defence Force vessels. The plans for both the warehouse and mechanical workshop has been completed, and construction for both facilities is estimated to cost **three point nine million dollars (\$3.9 million).**

Upgrades to the potable water supply will also be completed at HMBS Coral Harbour at an estimated cost of **one hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000)**.

Drone Programme
Madam Speaker,

The National Drone Programme which includes the five branches of law enforcement is headed by the Defence Force. In the upcoming fiscal year, several capital development projects were undertaken to support the drone programme.

At HMBS Coral Harbour, the erection of the

Drone Academy on the northern shore is nearing completion. The Academy consist of several modular units and includes classrooms, workshop and berthing spaces.

To complement, my Ministry will allocate **two million, eight hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$2,820,000)** for hardware purchase from SWIFT Tactical to support the drone programme.

Another **three million, ninety-four thousand, nine hundred and eighty dollars (\$3,094,980)**

will be allocated for software purchase from Innovirta to support the programme's network.

Vessel Purchase

Madam Speaker,

As previous shared by our Prime Minister, this Administration will allocate **six million dollars (\$6 million)** to begin the acquisition of the process to replace Her Majesty's Bahamian Ship, Arthur D. Hanna, which has been out of service since late 2017.

The vessel sustained extensive damages because of a grounding. We propose to

purchase a larger patrol vessel to replace HMBS A. D. Hanna and for the vessel to become the flag ship of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

Madam Speaker,

Driven by the rise in activity on the sea, especially illegal movements, and recreational boating, the more calls for assistance by the Defence Force is necessary. Hence, the continued need for vessel maintenance and replacements.

Again, this Davis-Cooper administration is

committed to equipping our agencies with 21st century resources.

Professional Development
Madam Speaker,

Continuous learning for Marines and Officers is essential to maneuver from warfare to peace operations. It allows Marines and Officers the opportunities to quickly observe changing conditions so that they are able to adapt and make timely decisions when called upon.

Such knowledge and skills must be learned, developed and improved over time. All of our

investments will present opportunities for Marines and Officers to leverage various disciplines, technologies and learning environments that reflect the different operational environments.

During this current fiscal year Marines and Officers participated in several training opportunities both locally and internationally including:

- Twenty-eight (28) persons participated in Tradewinds 2022, a multinational military exercise that was held in Belize in April of this year.

- Ninety-eight (98) persons completed courses sponsored by SOUTHCOM.
- One hundred and eighty (180) persons were trained in Crisis and Disaster Management and the training was facilitated by RBDF's Crisis and Disaster Management Units.
- Twenty-four (24) Senior Officers, thirty-six (36) Junior Officers, fifty-three (53) Warrant Officers, seventy-eight (78) Chief Petty Officers and ninety-two (92) Petty Officers participate in a Leadership and Management Seminars.
- Twenty-five (25) Junior Officers, fifty-six (56) Warrant Officers, seventy-three (73) Chief Petty Officers and eighty-eight (88) Petty Officers participated in a Strategic Planning Symposium.
- Eleven (11) persons are scheduled to participate in the Fuerzo Commando Exercise in Honduras this month.

Madam Speaker,

For this upcoming fiscal year, **three hundred and ninety thousand dollars (\$390,000)** has been allocated for tuition and training. For several years, Madam Speaker, efforts were made to have the Defence Force Training Programmes accredited.

At long last, funding totaling **two hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$230,000)** has been allocated to begin the process. The accreditation will bring greater value to the many

courses and programmes that are offered by the Defence Force. The ultimate goal is to transition the Agency into a premier training academy in the region, while offering our counterparts opportunities to participate.

Madam Speaker,

To complement, recruitment is essential and since coming to office, 202 Marines have been recruited and 109 are currently undergoing training. Recognizing the need to increase the Defence Force's human capital to meet its expanding mandate, this Administration has

committed to doubling the Force's personnel to three thousand (3,000) persons over the next several years.

This will require recruiting greater numbers and more regularly to meet this objective. Hence, **one point eight million dollars (\$1.8 million)** has been allocated in the 2022/2023 budget cycle for recruitment. In total, we hope to recruit 240 Marines to complement the current strength of the Agency.

Additionally, **seven hundred thousand dollars (\$700,000)** has been allocated for the purchase of uniforms and uniform supplies.

Madam Speaker,

Finally, the Government and people of The Bahamas are very proud of the outstanding accomplishments of the members of the Defence Force. We are also very appreciative of the multiple roles the Officers and Marines are called upon to perform and their ability to adapt.

The last three years have proven challenging, yet the Agency remains ever steadfast in their commitment to service. I, therefore, wish to thank the Commander of Defence, Commodore Dr. Raymond King, his Officers, Marines and civilians for their time, talent and treasure in maintaining the sovereignty of this great nation.

Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDOCS)

Madam Speaker,

I now focus my attention on The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDOCS) which is charged with housing inmates in a safe

and secure environment and, in doing so, prevent unlawful escapes and unauthorized entry.

For the 2022/2023 fiscal cycle, the agency has been allocated **thirty-one million, six hundred and forty-six thousand, four hundred and four dollars (\$31,646,404)** for recurrent expenditure. All capital expenditure will be allocated under my Ministry's budget.

Madam Speaker,

As of the 31st of May, 2022, the daily average

population at the Department of Correctional Services stood at 1,297 inmates and a recidivism rate of 12 percent. It is our goal to reduce the recidivism rate to 8 percent in the shortest possible time.

Madam Speaker,

The Sex Offender Registry is under the managerial control of the Department and there are currently four (4) participants. The Registry enables a sexual offender upon his/her release to sign into a pre-determined kiosk located at a police station.

It should be noted that if a sex offender is deemed to be a potential risk to society, the Minister may publish the offenders name, photo, and last known address to the public.

Madam Speaker,

The Department continues to operate in a COVID environment which has had a tremendous impact on the administration and specialized procedures and protocols. It should be noted that the facility is adhering to all health and safety protocols. Every precaution is being

taken to ensure the health and safety of both Officers and inmates.

Some of the measures taken include the testing of Officers and inmates, when necessary; all incoming inmates must be placed in isolation for 10 days; inmate classes and technical and vocational studies have been reduced; and all inmates who wish to be immunized have access to the Pfizer vaccine. There are 280 inmates fully vaccinated, thus far, at the Department.

Madam Speaker,

While safety is of the utmost importance, so is rehabilitation programmes for inmates. Complementary professional and personal programmes are the best ways of preventing inmates from re-offending (UNODC, 2020). The benefits are also extended to public safety when inmates are rehabilitated. Hence, the reason in taking a new approach to inmate transformation.

Madam Speaker,

The Department of Corrections, as stated in its Strategic Plan 2022/2023, has adopted a new Correctional Business Model. The new model

entails the Department introducing new specialist and rehabilitative units to complement. Specifically, Madam Speaker, the Department will employ the services of 11 specialists at an estimated costs of **six hundred and forty-one thousand dollars (\$641,000)** and included are:

- 2 Full Time Psychiatrists
- 1 Full Time Psychologist
- 1 Juvenile Counseling Specialist
- 1 Occupational Therapist
- 1 Inmate Industries Specialist
- 1 Human Resource Specialist
- 1 Nutritionist
- 1 Welding Specialist
- 1 Inmate Industries Coordinator
- 1 Inmate Enterprise Manager

Madam Speaker,

The need for specialist in correctional rehabilitation is essential for advancing the components of this new model with the overall goal for inmate rehabilitation. Hence, in the new model, the Department will be divided into two operational streams. The first will focus on security and, the other, on programming and rehabilitation.

Madam Speaker,

The existing Units will also undergo restructuring to support the new Correctional Business Model and included is the Inmates Classification Unit.

The re-launch of this Unit will allow for inmate screening and assessment, which will help identify the special needs, security, safety, and supervision requirements of inmates.

To complement, a new Programming Unit will be established to address the deficiencies and vulnerabilities in a direct targeted approach. For instance, Madam Speaker, if an offender is convicted of grievous harm, the Programming Unit will ensure that that offender sees a psychiatrist, psychologist, and be placed in an

Anger Management Course with emphasis on resocialization.

This three (3) room facility was recently completed at a cost of **twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000)**. Furnishing will be acquired in this budgetary period at a cost of **twenty-eight thousand dollars (\$28,000)**.

Madam Speaker,

The Case Management and Pre-Release Units will be re-launched in the upcoming fiscal year.

These Units will ensure that the offender

adheres to the sentence plan and that the programming outputs are completed.

The inmate will be further prepared for eventual release. The offender will be taught interview and job readiness skills and will be placed in the appropriate external industries programme.

Also, once an offender is complete, a report will be generated for use by the Internal Parole Unit.

With reference to the Internal Parole Unit, Madam Speaker, this will be established in this budgetary period. Staff are currently in training

with the assistance of Correctional Services Canada. Inmates will be prepared for the External Parole Board, with recommendations from the Correctional Internal Parole Board. To assist, **fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000)** has been allocated for this training.

Madam Speaker,

In 2016, the Christie lead Administration formed the Parole and Re-Entry Unit Committee. A report was generated; however, no action was taken for five (5) years. In this budgetary period, the proposed draft legislation will be revisited,

amended, and published for public commentary, with hopes of being legislated this calendar year.

Madam Speaker,

Since the onset of the pandemic, contact visitation to the Department has ceased. To ensure that inmates remain in contact with their families, the Government agreed to allow a virtual pilot programme by the vendor NCIC out of Texas.

The programme ran for four (4) months and was extremely successful. If this system is approved,

the vendor is prepared to outfit the facility with video visitation capabilities for the seven (7) existing wings at the Department.

It is anticipated that there will be two (2) forms of visits which includes schedule and unscheduled.

Additionally, all visits will carry a charge of 21 cents per minute once outside of the Government Prescribed Visitation Centres which should be acquired or constructed in the 2023/2024 budgetary period.

It should be noted that the virtual visitation is

slated to be a public-private partnership. It is anticipated that each call will last for a duration of 30 minutes or at a cost of **\$6.30**, per visit.

Madam Speaker,

It is further anticipated that there will be on average 300 home visit calls per day at a value of **one thousand, eight hundred and ninety dollars (\$1,890)**. This excludes paid special visitation and legal visits. It is anticipated that the Department will retain 20 percent of revenue generated from this process and remit the remaining to the Public Treasury.

Madam Speaker,

The Inmate Kitchen at the Department has been condemned by successive administrations. The cooking plant is old, unsanitary, and the nutritional value of the food is inconsistent. The plant has no dietician and professional certified chefs.

Meals are prepared daily by inmates under the supervision of Correctional Officers. The facility expends well over **two point nine million dollars (\$2.9 million)** on raw food for inmates. It

is estimated that each meal cost in excess of **four dollars (\$4.00)** in real cost.

When taking the current inmate population into consideration, the costs of food per day is **fifteen thousand, five hundred and sixty-four dollars (\$15,564)**. In adopting the new correctional model, it is imperative that the food delivery services be enhanced and food wastage drastically reduced due to poor quality in nutritional value and taste.

Since coming to Office, we have recently

entertained a private-public partnership assessment of the food delivery programme at the Department.

Madam Speaker,

The report is extensive and offered a solution that is practiced by many correctional facilities throughout Canada and the United States.

This is the ‘cook and chill concept’ which entails various nutritional food of various types being prepared by a private entity and frozen to be transported to the facility, before being reheated

and served. This concept will reduce meal costs to **\$3.50** as opposed to the current cost of **\$4**.

Madam Speaker,

By utilizing this private concept of food production and distribution, the Department will realize the following benefits.

- Provide a healthier diet for inmates;
- Reduce food wastage;
- Reduce contraband movement through the various facilities;
- Reduce the level of illnesses among inmates as the food will be prepared by professional

staff and dieticians with the focus being placed on nutritional value;

- Reduce the overall raw food cost; and
- Eliminate the large labour force of inmates to prepare meals

Madam Speaker,

To enhance food security at the Department, the Agency is partnering with BAMSI to develop its poultry farming. The poultry farm has 210 birds and produces on average 50 cartons of organic eggs for consumption weekly.

Additionally, we have recently entered into an agreement with BAMSI to transfer and transport

45 hogs to Andros. With this agreement, the Department hopes for BAMSI to develop a hog breeding programme and to eventually produce fresh pork for the institution going forward.

To date, four (4) acres of farmland has been totally cleared for the first time in 15 years. The Department now seeks to expand growing its own vegetables, spices, and fruits for daily inmates' consumption. It is anticipated that the Department will realize an annual saving of **one hundred and fifteen thousand dollars (\$115,000)** for hog feed.

Madam Speaker,

The Department adopted a new correctional philosophy beginning in 2014 with the passage of the new Correctional Act. Prior to its passing, the Department relied on punishment as a form of reformation.

This implementation of a rehabilitation model is hindered by poor unsanitary living conditions. For example, maximum security was constructed in 1952 to house 214 inmates, but currently houses more than 500 persons.

The centralized wing has no toilets, showers, lights, proper ventilation, dining area, study areas, medical facilities and bedding. In its current state, Madam Speaker, it is nearly impossible to implement a new correctional rehabilitative model. Therefore, a new high medium facility is urgently needed.

Madam Speaker,

A new facility will enable true rehabilitation, significantly reduce contraband, enhance security, and improve living and working conditions for inmates and staff.

Again, Madam Speaker, through private-public partnership we seek to construct a **forty-four million dollars (\$44,000,000)** facility with a combination of cells that will house 820 inmates.

Each cell will also have toilets, showers, and individual bedding. The entire facility will be automated and have all of the amenities like any modern facility throughout the United States and Canada. Additionally, the new facility would have a Processing Intake Centre, a Mental Health Facility, and a Medical Facility that would enable

minor surgeries and programming areas to foster the climate of true reform.

Madam Speaker,

To complement, a new state-of-the-art Remand Virtual Court at an estimated cost of **two point five million dollars (\$2.5 million)** will be constructed; again, through private-public partnership. The need for such a facility stems from the Department outgrowing the current facility's effective use.

The facility was constructed to process 50 inmates per day for further remand. Currently, there are 100 inmates processed per day for Magistrate's Court matters and 20 for Supreme Court matters daily.

In addition to the space challenges, there are also major security issues with the current facility. There are insufficient cells to hold the inmates for further remand processing. Therefore, large number of inmates are secured in the court yard.

The new court will consist of 16 automated cells, 12 Magistrate's Virtual Courts, 2 Supreme Courts, and two 2 Appeal Virtual Courts. It is anticipated that construction will commence in the last quarter of this year.

Madam Speaker,

To ensure that the new correctional model is accepted and practiced, the Department will implement the following training measures.

- Ensure that all Executive Managers are trained in Correctional Leadership by Correctional Services Canada (CSC);

- Ensure that all mid-level managers are trained, as outlined in the recently signed MOU with Canada;
- Introduce 80 hours of mandatory correctional training;
- Accept and identify new targeted training initiatives that will mitigate the effects of gangs and contraband inflows;
- Re-launch the Training Advisory Council to facilitate first, second, and post-graduate degrees studies that applies to the institutional needs;
- Introduce a rank examination for staff promotion;
- Introduce firearms certification for 350 Officers; and

- Train 70 Correctional Officers from all ranks in special targeted disciplines with the assistance of the American Embassy.

To fulfill training, **one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)** has been all located in the upcoming fiscal year.

To complement training will be recruitment as it is necessary for the continuation of services at the Department. In the new fiscal year, Madam Speaker, the Department will recruit 200 Trainee Officers in two squads. **One point eight million dollars (\$1.8 million)** has been allocated to facilitate the same.

Madam Speaker,

To further support personnel, during the next fiscal period, my Ministry will allocate **three hundred and forty-one thousand dollars (\$341,000)** for the purchase of vehicles. Of the total, four (4) cars will be acquired for the medical doctors at the facility.

Additionally, two (2) new secure 19 seater Transit XL 250 transport buses will be purchased to transport inmates to the various courts and hospital. With the two (2) acquisitions, of the

latter, it will eliminate the daily fast moving convoys that traverse the streets of New Providence daily.

Mr. Speaker,

Prison reform can only happen if we match our talk with action and this Administration remains in action mode. I have come to accept that the level of success in crime prevention on our streets is directly proportionate to the level of success we see in our correctional centre.

Prison reform is not a luxury – it is a national imperative and our Government is committed to making it a reality.

Madam Speaker,

Finally, this Administration is keenly aware of the challenges being faced by the Department of Corrections. We have committed to take incremental, but substantial investments to improve the working conditions for Officers; the living conditions for inmates; and offer more rehabilitative services and programmes to improve inmate lives upon release.

With that being said, the Government and the people of The Bahamas are very proud of the outstanding accomplishments of the members of the Department of Corrections. We are also very appreciative of your commitment in the less than ideal situation and we hope to bring realistic relief soon.

I wish to thank the Acting Commissioner, Mr. Doan Cleare, his Officers and civilians for their time, talent and treasure in maintaining a safe and secure environment.

Rehabilitation of Offenders

Madam Speaker,

Closely tied to the Department of Corrections is the rehabilitation of offenders. The Rehabilitation of Offenders Committee is designed to make recommendations for the expungement of records of certain offences of ex-offenders. The key goal is to assist members of society who have paid their debt to society and have gone on to live productive lives since release.

For society, the reduction in reoffending will mean less victims of crime and less social and economic cost to the community. Successful rehabilitation leads to safer communities and by assisting persons in clearing their records goes a long way in the overall safety and advancement of our nation.

Madam Speaker,

This Administration is about action. We have listened to and heard the woes of those first-time offenders, who have not breached any laws and, yet, are held hostage by their past. For the

reporting period, January to May, 2022, my
Ministry received:

48 Applications from Nassau
17 Applications Grand Bahama
8 Applications from Bimini
Total 73 Applications

Of the application, 44 have been expunged and
8 referred to the Prerogative of Mercy. Before the
end of this month, the Committee will review
another 23 applications.

Madam Speaker,

My Ministry remains committed to assisting
members of society chart a new path to live a

productive life. I would also like to encourage members of society with past convictions to submit an application for review with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Committee.

Inspector General of Security Forces

Madam Speaker,

This Administration is committed to “good governance, with integrity, and accountability” and the same is outlined in our ‘*Blueprint for Change*’. To this end, my Ministry will establish

the fully functional Office of the Inspector General.

It is my belief, Madam Speaker, that our security forces must adapt to the way they are organized, what they do and how they do it, in light of globalized trends.

This is where the Office of the Inspectorate comes into play as the Office will have the capacity to inspect, investigate, and evaluate the professional performances of security forces, inclusive of all agencies of the Heads of National

Law Enforcement Agencies (HONLEA) that are under my remit.

In keeping with this Administration's plan, the Office of the Inspector General will enhance the standards of efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of the agencies.

Madam Speaker,

Most would agree that professionalism and proficiency among our law enforcement agencies are fundamental to preserving and

maintaining our nation's prosperity, peace, and security.

But, more importantly, the effectiveness of these essential organizations requires public trust and support to roll-back and minimize negative trends that threaten our safety and livelihood as a people.

Recent crime trends and security challenges in a rapidly developing Bahamas demand a strategic response that builds trust and cooperation

between law enforcement and civil society among our communities.

For this reason, my Ministry is finalizing draft legislation for Cabinet approval and tabling in the House to execute the Office of the Inspector General.

This draft legislation proposes to expand the limited powers initially granted to the Security Forces Inspectorate that the previous administration left incomplete.

Madam Speaker,

This revised initiative comes at a critical time in our nation's social evolution and is complementary to the Government's resolve to maximize the use of scientific methods to assess and evaluate the performances of our law enforcement agencies for more informed decision making at the policy level.

The proposed legislation, therefore, seeks to expand the capability and capacity of the Office of the Inspector General to conduct inspections, investigations, audits, and evaluations of

security forces to ensure that these agencies are compliant with policies, laws, and regulations for maximum performance in safeguarding the safety and security of Bahamians.

Additionally, this new Office would be responsible for advising and making recommendations to the Minister of National Security on all matters relevant to security forces' efficacy, proficiency, and effectiveness, inclusive of interagency coordination and collaboration on issues relative to law enforcement.

Madam Speaker,

The Office of the Inspector General would have oversight of the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, The Bahamas Department of Correctional Services; The Bahamas Customs Department, and The Bahamas Immigration Department. It will also be responsible for ensuring that:

- Agencies are compliant with laws, policies, regulations, and operational standards;
- Improving organizational efficacy in the delivery of stated goals;

- Maintaining ethical standards; improving coordination; and
- Cooperation between security forces, and strengthening relations between the security forces and the general public.

Madam Speaker,

As a result, the proposed institution will assist the Government in making more informed policy decisions, while bolstering our law enforcement agencies' abilities to meet their strategic goals effectively.

Additionally, the Office of Inspector General would provide invaluable assistance with

improving ethical standards, accountability, and transparency, while reducing complaints and lawsuits against law enforcement personnel.

Therefore, this Office will provide vital expertise to examine, evaluate, and position security forces for higher dimensions of success. Thus, a draft Bill for the Office of Inspector General is being prepared for Cabinet's consideration and tabling in Parliament to empower the proposed Agency to meet these objectives.

The assistance provided by this Office will work toward minimizing losses associated with mismanagement and wastage. That is a pledge that this Davis-Cooper Administration has made and, I committed to achieving the same.

Madam Speaker,

The Office of Inspector General would be headed by an Inspector General and staffed by qualified staff specializing in administration, operations, support services (maintenance), finance, legal affairs, and research and analysis. With the acceptance and successful passage of

this Bill in Parliament, the Office of the Inspector General would be able to commence operations during the second half of the 2022/2023 fiscal year.

Finally, Madam Speaker, if approved, my Ministry will be requesting **two point five million dollars (\$2.5 million)** for the acquisition and outfitting of facilities, personal emoluments, and expenses associated with the performance of duties.

It is anticipated that the implementation of the Office of the Inspector General of Security Forces will result in greater returns on the Government's investments in security for a more safe and secure Bahamas.

Parliamentary Registration Department (PRD)

Madam Speaker,

I now focus my attention on the Parliamentary Registration Department (PRD) which is responsible for ensuring that all eligible Bahamians have the opportunity to register and to vote in free and fair elections. It is also

charged with the responsibility of maintaining the continuous electoral register of voters in a state of readiness for any election, referendum or by-election, at short notice.

For the 2022/2023 fiscal cycle, the agency has been allocated **one million, one hundred and seventy-six thousand, four hundred and twenty (\$1,176,420)** for recurrent expenditure.

All capital expenditure will be allocated under my Ministry's budget.

Madam Speaker,

Key to maintaining our democracy is the accuracy of the Voter Register and ensuring that all qualified constituents can enjoy the right to vote. Despite the general election being held last year, persons are still able to present themselves to the Registration Department.

All persons presenting to register must be resident in their residence for 90 days or 3 consecutive months and must meet the legal qualifications for registration, as cited in Section 19 of the Parliamentary Elections Act.

Upon presentation, the individual will be interviewed and must provide one of the following documents for verification:

1. Valid Bahamian passport or
2. A birth certificate, a government issued ID and the Bahamian passport or birth certificate of the applicant's mother

Madam Speaker,

This activity is also carried out at the PRD, its sub-office in Freeport, Grand Bahama and at the Administrator's Office throughout the Family Islands. The sub-office in Freeport is directly linked to the Head Office in New Providence, and

can access electronic data/information on registered voters, daily.

Prior to Hurricane Dorian in 2019, it was hoped that a similar sub-office would have been opened in Marsh Harbour, Abaco, operating out of the Office of the District Administrator, under similar circumstances.

Madam Speaker,

The voter registration as of the 3rd February, 2022 comprised 194,438 voters, as follows:

Family Islands	29,307
Grand Bahama	30,955
<u>New Providence</u>	<u>134,176</u>

Total **194,438**

As of the 2nd June, 2022, the total number of persons on the Voter Register is:

Family Islands	29,186
Grand Bahama	30,913
<u>New Providence</u>	<u>133,977</u>
Total	194,076

Madam Speaker,

This decline could be attributed to the ongoing removal of deceased voters or persons incarcerated over the stated period, as the removal of names from the register, due to death or incarceration, is ongoing in an effort to ensure

that the Register is accurate and ready for any elections.

However, there has been a steady increase in daily registration and transfers for persons to other constituencies.

Madam Speaker,

Honourable Members may recall that a 2021 amendment to the Parliamentary Elections Act converted the 2017 voter register into a Continuous Register. As a result, the voter register is now permanent and a new register will

no longer be created every five (5) years as was the legal requirement prior to the amendment.

To meet the challenges associated with maintaining a Continuous Register, the Department must be restructured and resourced with the appropriate human resource skill sets.

In this regard, currently, the Department is continuing its ongoing efforts, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Public Service and National Insurance to complete a revised organizational structure that would enable the

Department to meet the challenges of managing and maintaining a Continuous Register.

Madam Speaker,

The Department of Transformation and Digitization (DTaD) has also been fully engaged to develop the scope of works for the digital solution of the voter registration, inclusive of a better methodology to more efficiently manage the removal of deceased voters off the register.

Once completed, it will be determined whether

the development of the proposed solution will be done in house or ultimately outsourced via an open RFP process.

The Department had also expanded its digitization efforts by initiating the scanning of counterfoils to the database. The hard drive space in which the data base system is installed, will have to be upgraded as a priority to ensure there is sufficient capacity to manage the increase number of counterfoil and photo scanned.

Madam Speaker,

The first phase of the “*As is Process*” is presently being reviewed with a view to moving forward to the next phase. The Honourable Wade Watson, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Economic Affairs, has assured that the digitization of the voter registration system is a high priority of this Administration.

Subsequently, Mr. Patrick Davis, the National Coordinator for Information Technology is spearheading the technical aspect of the project. It should also be noted that the PRD now has

direct access to the Registrar General's death portal.

This direct access enables the PRD to remove dead persons from the Continuous Register in a timelier manner following the established protocols.

Madam Speaker,

As the Department seeks to modernize the voter registration system the use of technology is critical. Additionally, an ancillary benefit will be a

significant reduction in the use of paper which is in keeping with the mandate of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, formerly Ministry of Finance, to reduce the usage of paper.

Given this, a project to digitize all voter card counterfoils was implemented during the latter part of 2021 and is ongoing. It is anticipated that as a part of the digitization of the voter registration system the digitized counterfoils can be easily merged with a new system.

A number of employees recruited to manage the Advanced Poll application process have been retained specifically to focus primarily on the digitization of the counterfoils in the first instance.

Madam Speaker,

It is important to note the Department is not only responsible for the General Elections, but Local Government and School Board Elections. For the reporting period, January to May, 2022, the Department facilitated a successful Local Government Elections on the 27th January, 2022

to elect Districts Councilors for 20 districts and Town Committee Members for 13 districts.

It should be noted that Local Government Elections are held every three (3) years, however due to COVID-19, the last election was held in 2020. All elected members have been duly sworn in to begin work for the areas they now represent.

Madam Speaker,

The Department received nominations for School Board Elections for 103 schools

throughout The Bahamas. It should be noted that this reflected a 60 percent increase from 2017 when only 64 schools participated. As a result of the majority of the candidates being “declared elected,” actual elections only took place in 16 schools on the 29th April, 2022.

However, there was a tie for the third School Board member seat at the Adelaide Primary School and San Salvador High School. As a result of this tie, a runoff election took place on the 16th May, 2022.

Madam Speaker,

On the 3rd May, 2022, a new nomination was held for two schools, where the number of candidates nominated was less than three. Additionally, one extra school, namely Stuart Manor Primary, was added to the School Board Schedule.

Hence, the School's Nomination Day was also held on the 3rd May, 2022, and this resulted in a total of 103 schools, as communicated earlier.

To complement the School Board Elections, the swearing in ceremonies were held for schools on

a number of in the Family Islands headed by the Minister of Education and those members elected in New Providence were sworn in on the 12th May, 2022 at a special ceremony.

Madam Speaker,

In the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the Parliamentary Department will continue to work aggressively with DTaD to complete the scope of works with a view to totally transforming the Department, while simultaneously exploring other initiatives including a review of the Parliamentary Elections

Act, to further enhance the voter registration and electoral process in The Bahamas.

Madam Speaker,

Finally, The Bahamas has a longstanding history of free and fair elections and the efforts to maintain a fully democratic society through elections is an ongoing one. Continuous financial and human investments, partnership with the general public and due care are key components that must always be exercised.

I, therefore, wish to thank the Acting Parliamentary Commissioner, Mr. Lavardo Duncanson, and the hard working staff at the Parliamentary Registration Department for their service in the form of time, talent and treasure in maintaining a time honoured process in our nation.

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP)

Madam Speaker,

The Citizen Security and Justice Programme (CSJP) is funded through a \$20 million dollars loan from the Inter-American Development Bank

(IDB). The programme seeks to use multi-faceted approaches to crime and violence-prevention and reduction in The Bahamas.

Since its inception, the CSJP has worked tirelessly to execute activities and achieve outputs in a manner that will greatly contribute to favorable outcomes by the project's previously expected closure on the 4th August, 2022.

Madam Speaker,

I am excited to announce that in collaboration

with the network of coordinating Ministries, Department and agencies, the CSJP project execution committee has discovered new opportunities to make an even greater impact through this loan facility. A number of new and exciting CSJP initiatives have commenced which I will outline in my contribution.

Additionally, to ensure that these new outputs are advanced to completion and have maximum impact, the IDB has approved an additional extension of six (6) months which now changes

the project closure date from August, 2022 to February, 2023.

Madam Speaker,

I am pleased to report that the project has realized notable levels of progress since the start of 2022.

Component One

Madam Speaker, Component One of the CSJP has prioritized the refurbishment, expansion and further operationalization of three (3) youth and community centres in New Providence.

These youth and community centres in Fox Hill, the Bain and Grant's Town (Quakoo Street) and Baillou Hill Road (Edmund Moxey) are now fully operational with designated Centre Managers – who signed their contracts with my Ministry in January 2020.

To ensure proper operational practices, while maximizing productivity, a Youth and Community Centre Operations Manual has been developed as a strategic guide for how these community centres will operate post-CSJP.

This manual includes strategies and mechanisms to promote services and activities via website and social media for the centres. Additionally, the Operations Manual includes a business development strategy which proposes a methodology for the centres to generate income which I anticipate will offset some operational costs for the Government.

Madam Speaker,

This Operations Manual is essential to the future

evolution of these community centres as it proposes a paradigm shift from segregated, independent facilities to a seamless Community Centre Network. Through the implementation of the strategies outlined in the operations manual, it is anticipated that these centres will connect communities in a profound and technological fashion.

Madan Speaker

The Community Centre Operations Manual is only one part of a multifaceted approach to community development. One major barrier to

connecting communities is the lack of technology.

Subsequently, a Community Centre

Management System (CCMS) is being implemented along with a System Administrator for technical oversight. This system will allow the community centres to '*talk to each other*' through data collection, data sharing and user referrals.

Additionally, this system will allow the various centres to capture important information about the users of the centres which may be used by

law enforcement and various other sections of Government to combat crime and violence.

Lastly, with respect to the Community Centre Network, the CSJP is now concluding the procurement process for selecting a firm to develop an e-learning management system which will be primarily accessed within the community centres.

It is anticipated that this firm will transform the various paper-based curricula developed under the CSJP such as the Healthy Relationships

Curriculum, Gender Based Violence Curriculum and Soft Skills Curriculum, to name a few, to a suite of high quality digital learning tools that will be accessed through an e-learning platform, designed specifically for the CSJP.

Madam Speaker,

This innovative new approach to community development along with the tools and products being developed will be transferred to the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture at the close of the CSJP.

Stakeholders from the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture have expressed great excitement about the prospect of sustaining this Community Centre Network.

In fact, the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture have identified a group of highly qualified professionals who will soon embark on a 12 months apprenticeship at the various community centres. This experience will ensure that once the CSJP has concluded, there is trained personnel available to sustain the long-term operations of the community centers.

Component Two
Madam Speaker,

Component Two of the CSJP focuses on increasing employability and employment of at-risk youth in New Providence. To achieve this goal, the youth training aspect of this Component has been reimagined into what is now called, 'Revive Academy'.

Revive Academy is a free job readiness programme offered to youth between the ages of

15-29 years. Its motto is '*Tomorrow is For The Taking*', and it strives to provide competency-based training that will accelerate one's journey to job readiness.

Madam Speaker,

I am pleased to announce that over 1,000 Bahamian youth have been training and certified in essential job readiness skills such as Soft Skills, Numeracy and Literacy by the University of The Bahamas (UB) and The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI).

Having completed this first phase of training at a cost of **seven hundred thousand dollars (\$700,000)**, the CSJP has allocated an additional **eight hundred and forty thousand dollars (\$840,000)** to procuring a firm to deliver technical training to 1,052 beneficiaries between the ages 15-29 years. It is anticipated that this technical training will begin by August, 2022.

Madam Speaker

A major objective of this project is to help unemployed youth secure gainful employment

by provided access to job readiness training and establishing clout within the private sector.

With this objective in mind, the CSJP intends to procure a Private Sector Engagement Consultant to build relationships with employers in the private sector and connect them with high performing graduates of the Revive Academy Programme.

It is anticipated that the majority of participants in the Revive Academy will find long terms

employment as a result of this essential consultancy.

Component Three

Madam Speaker,

The overarching goal of Component Three of the CSJP is to improve justice services throughout The Bahamas. This component supports the judiciary's revolutionary modernization and reform programme designed to bring unprecedented improvement to the court system of The Bahamas.

It is with this singular focus of "*improving justice*

services for all' that the CSJP set forth to:

- Leveraging technology to make court processes more efficient;
- Upgrading the IT infrastructural backbone of the courts by providing IT equipment; and
- Upgrading the physical environment of key areas within the judiciary.

At the same time, through the CSJP, deliberate focus is being given to providing a plethora of differentiated ICT training for the judiciary.

Madam Speaker,

With the support of CSJP, the justice system in

The Bahamas is being upgraded from its

historically antiquated, slow state and changed to better respond the demands of users. The project is tackling long standing systemic challenges with a comprehensive solution and multifaceted approach designed to increase speed and productivity within the Judiciary.

For this development, the CSJP has allocated approximately **two million dollars (\$2 million)** to implement an Integrated Case Management System (ICMS) within the courts.

This system essentially combines the use of software, hardware, and cloud technologies to

bring the judiciary to the highest level of performance and lead it on the path to a fully paperless court with e-services.

Further, the ICMS will automate the entire production of court performance reporting and analytics, making it possible for courts, judges, administrators, and registrars to quickly and easily develop new lines of sight into the efficiency of their operations and the execution of their duties.

This development and implementation is ongoing and, I am happy to report that, full

implementation is expected before the end of this year (2022) Hands-on software testing is currently ongoing and it is expected to be completed shortly.

Madam Speaker,

The CSJP has further prioritized the modernization of the courts by spending approximately **four hundred and eighty thousand dollars (\$480,000)** to convert over four (4) million registry documents into digital format, essentially rendering the court paperless.

This digitization element complements the ICSM and ensures efficiency across all departments within the judiciary. I am happy to report that CSJP has allocated additional funding to digitize up to an additional four point five (4.5) million paper documents within the judiciary by the end of 2022.

As part of transitioning the court system to this reformed, modern, technology-driven environment, the CSJP is allocating additional funding to support several strands of training for the judiciary.

Since January, 2022 judiciary staff including judicial officers and judges from across The Bahamas have completed several rounds of user acceptance testing, as well as, pre-testing and live onsite skill assessments.

Component Four
Madam Speaker,

Traditional crime prevention strategies focus on one facet of crime prevention at a time. This Administration supports the view that a multi-faceted, synchronous approach to crime and violence-prevention is a more effective strategy.

A part of this strategy has to involve inmate rehabilitation. Component Four of the CSJP focuses on the reduction of recidivism in The Bahamas. The reduction of recidivism is a legitimate crime prevention and reduction strategy.

During the period under review, 77 new inmates were trained and certified through the BTVI. To date, more than 400 certificates have been awarded through the BTVI satellite unit that exists within the Department of Corrections including:

- 49 Automotive Repairs
- 69 in Barbering and Cosmetology
- 65 in Basic Electrical Installation
- 31 in Garment – Manufacturing
- 39 in Basic Masonry
- 61 in Plumbing
- 36 in Information Technology

Once these inmates have left prison, they can continue their education at BTVI with the possibility of earning diplomas, trade certifications, even an Associate of Arts degrees if they continue to qualify themselves.

Madam Speaker,

The CSJP is also concerned with our juveniles

whom are housed in the Simpson Penn and Willie Mae Prat Centres. Research suggests that effective rehabilitation is important because it can contribute in eliminating the cycle of recidivism and proper rehabilitation which can assist juvenile delinquents from resorting to adult criminal activity (Darbouze, n.d.).

In addition, this is a part of youth agenda, as outlined in our '*Blueprint for Change*'. Hence, in partnership with the Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Renewal, we will

work to devise strategies to reduce recidivism at the juvenile level.

Madam Speaker,

Contract negotiations are being completed for the refurbishment of training spaces at the Simpson Penn Centre for Boys and the Willie Mae Pratt Centre for girls at a costs of **four hundred and forty-one thousand, four hundred and one dollars (\$441,401).**

With reference to the Willie Mae Pratt Centre approvals have been granted for work to begin

in May, 2022 and the scope of works will include:

- Refurbishment of one of the residential cottages which will function as a pre-release, hospitality, housekeeping, informational technology and vocational skills building facility. This cottage will be occupied by pre-qualified ladies who will reside three to six months before release.
- Refurbishment of the library to accommodate 10 computers to form a Computer Lab which will double as a virtual learning unit capable of hosting learning activities streamed from outside of the Centre.
- Refurbishment and re-equipping of the Cosmetology Unit to assist in enhancing trade skills.

Madam Speaker,

To complement, the Simpson Penn Centre for

Boys will undergo refurbishment to:

- The recreational room above the dining area which will be transformed into a virtual learning centre for technical and vocational training to include training in barbering, information technology, plumbing and electrical work and other construction trades.
- This area will also house an instructional barbering unit.

Madam Speaker,

As previously noted, this Administration is committed to a multi-faceted approach to address the scourges of crime and violence. To complement the infrastructural upgrades to our

juvenile facilities, **seventy thousand dollars (\$70,000)** will be allocated to a consultancy firm.

The goal is to determine and implement the necessary training and infrastructural facilities to assess, follow up and track what happens to juveniles once they come into contact with the law through the oversight of the Department of Rehabilitative Welfare Services.

Madam Speaker,

To support this initiative, beginning July, 2022, Probation Officers will be trained to use a risk

assessment and case management tool. This tool will allow for the continuous tracking and assessment processes that would support more effective interventions by allowing Officers to assess early the risk and needs of our children and to adjust intervention based on the assessed needs of the juveniles' in-care.

Again, Madam Speaker, this is another goal of this Administration. The ultimate goal is for this Administration to be able to respond more effectively in preventing our children from graduating to prison life at The Bahamas

Department of Correctional Services once they have come into conflict with the law.

Madam Speaker,

We are all keenly aware of the increase of violence against women and girls, which is being attributed to COVID-19. To assist in finding feasible ways to address this violence, my Ministry, under the CSJP will conduct the Women's National Health and Well-Being Survey from the 15th June, 2022 to 15th August, 2022.

The survey will provide the opportunity to collect nationally representative data on violence against women and girls in The Bahamas. The results of this study will provide evidence-based interventions in attempts to reduce and prevent violence against girls and women.

Madam Speaker,

To support this initiative, **two hundred and eighty-seven thousand, seven hundred and seventy-three dollars (\$287,773)** will be allocated. By the end of September, 2022 the full results of the study should be available for

review along with the comprehensive intervention-care model for persons who have been victimized, which would have been informed by the data collected.

This will be completed in partnership with the various public-private victim care agencies. Our ultimate goal is to provide a safe environment for all girls and women so that they can live life to their fullest potential.

Madam Speaker,

This Davis-Cooper Administration remains

committed to serving the needs of all in our society, particularly the most vulnerable. The continued investment and support of the CSJP, does exactly that.

During the upcoming fiscal cycle, we will continue to offer programmes to advance our youth agenda, support the youth in their respective communities, offer feasible options for juvenile and adult offenders with the intent to improve their lives in the future, and improve our judicial sector as it is critical to maintaining a safe and secure society.

Madam Speaker,

I would like to thank Project Manager, Dr. Dorcas Cox, and the entire team of the CSJP for their hard and dedication to this Programme, of which, we will reap rewards for generations to come.

Trafficking in Persons (TIPS)

Madam Speaker,

Trafficking in persons or human trafficking continues to be a challenging domestic and transnational threat negatively impacting the lives of victims, regardless of their gender, race, class or age. This multi-billion dollar industry

yields high profits for traffickers, but robs victims of their human rights and dignity.

Victims face all forms of abuse including physical, psychological and emotional harm.

They are commonly forced into acts of prostitution, forced labour, domestic servitude and subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment.

Madam Speaker,

Traffickers exploit the vulnerabilities of their victims which can include young persons in

dysfunctional families experiencing abuse and neglect; and those that are runaways who are at high risk for exploitation. Persons looking for a better way of life and those impacted by natural disasters who are displaced tend to be more vulnerable.

Through the use of fraud and deception, victims are lured by false job offers in print and social media. Many traffickers also form false romantic relationships and other deceptive social relationships to trap their victim. These examples provided are not exhaustive, they are only a few

of the ways in which victims are trapped into this lifestyle.

Madam Speaker,

The Trafficking In Persons (TIPS) Inter- Ministry Committee and the TIPS Task Force are two national coordinating bodies in direct partnership with non-government agencies.

The bodies continue to meet bi-weekly to ensure oversight of the enforcement of the Trafficking In Persons Act; delivery of services, as outlined in the plan to provide assistance to victims of TIPS

and their accompanying dependent children;
and the execution of TIPS operating procedures
including the implementation of TIPS strategic
goals and objectives of the National Anti-
Trafficking Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2023.

Madam Speaker,

For the reporting period, January to May, 2022,
there were no TIPS matters identified; however,
the Unit and its partner agencies remain diligent
in their respective roles. Of importance to note,
there are five (5) cases pending trial and they
stem from incidents in 2021. Of the cases, two

matters are in the Supreme Court, while three are the Magistrate Court.

Madam Speaker,

From the incidents in 2021, the TIPS Task Force continues to provide comprehensive services to facilitate the well-being and recovery of victims and their children. From the five (5) cases alluded, there are five (5) victims and five (5) children that are receiving assistance.

This assistance includes food, utility, transportation, travel and translation services.

Other services may include medical care, dental care and psychological counselling. Specifically, adults also receive assistance with job readiness skills and children receive free school uniforms and school supplies.

In addition to these services, all victims are issued a monthly stipend for their upkeep. To date, Madam Speaker, my Ministry and the Ministry of Social Services has spent approximately **sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000)** on victim care. In the upcoming fiscal year, my Ministry will allocate **eighty-one**

thousand dollars (\$81,000) for the care of victims of trafficking, rent assistance, training and awareness campaigns.

Madam Speaker,

Over the past few months, my Ministry has partnered in several different initiatives to increase the effectiveness and efficiencies in Government Ministries and Departments responsible for anti-trafficking efforts.

To complement, aggressive recruitment by all law-enforcement agencies have increased the

number of frontline workers in the field. Hence, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that beginning January, 2022 all recruits in the Defence Force, Department of Immigration and Police Force have been trained in their role in regards to TIPS.

Madam Speaker,

With the increased capacity, I am certain that the number of TIPS matters investigated and prosecuted will be more successful. In addition to these training, other industry professional trained include: medical professionals, tourism

professionals partaking in the Bahama Host Programme, social workers, civil society organizations, youth organizations and the general public. From January to May, 2022, the team facilitated the training of almost 1,800 individuals.

Madam Speaker,

This has immensely increased the nation's capacity to identify victims. TIPS Investigators have received specialized training and the Special Prosecutorial Team assigned to prosecute TIPS cases have increased.

In addition, to these major milestones the Labour Department has hired six (6) new Labour Inspectors that have already been trained. This increased staffing level will increase opportunities for increased inspections at work sites and increased opportunities for the identification of those exploited in various industries.

Madam Speaker,

As part of the global effort to eradicate trafficking, The Bahamas reports on the status of its activities. As of to date, The Bahamas has met

its reporting obligations in this area by completing the 2021 Trafficking In Person Questionnaire.

The country has also fulfilled other reporting obligations within the United Nations System in respect to monitoring the progress of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16.2.2.

The goal seeks to end all forms of abuse, exploitation and trafficking in all forms and it is being achieved in conjunction with the Bureau of Gender and Family Affairs and other local

partner agencies with the preparation of the report for the Convention of Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEWDAW).

Madam Speaker,

As you are aware, TIPS crimes transcends borders and, in some cases, both victims and perpetrators maybe of foreign decent. Fostering regional and international partnerships and cooperation to combat trafficking is a regional priority.

My Ministry is currently working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to host the Second TIPS Conference in early November, 2022. We are indeed grateful for the support of the US Embassy with providing funding for the first conference.

It is anticipated that this forum will provide for meaningful exchange of best practices, foster mutual assistance in investigations and judicial proceedings among regional partners.

Madam Speaker,

On the 30th July, 2022 my Ministry will be celebrating ‘World Day Against Trafficking in Persons’. To commemorate this occasion, a fun-run-walk will be held at Goodman’s Bay from 6:00 a.m. to 12 noon.

The most exciting event will be the ‘*Ministers’ Dash*’ and, we look forward for the participation of all Ministers affiliated with TIPS and their Ministry personnel.

I also extend an invitation to other Ministers and

non-government organizations to partner with my Ministry in support of the events. To complement, a church service is scheduled for Sunday, 31st July, 2022 at Faith Temple Ministries beginning at 10:30 a.m. More updates concerning these events will be provided.

Madam Speaker,

Human trafficking remains a global threat and the TIPS Task Force and the Inter- Ministry Committee remains committed to eradicating this modern day form of slavery. I would like to thank the Chairman of the TIPS Task Force and

the Inter- Ministry Committee, all Ministries, Departments and civic organizations for their hard work and dedication.

National Anti-Drug Secretariat (NADS)

Madam Speaker,

The National Anti-Drug Secretariat (NADS)

serves as the national policy and planning agency for illicit drug control matters. NADS, as it is known, is responsible for liaising with those international agencies involved in drug control to ensure that the nation has a voice in regional and global discussions and that global changes and

recommendations are reflected in local plans and programmes.

In doing so, NADS attempts to ensure that the nation, as it implements its laws, policies and procedures, remains in compliance with the three international drug conventions, namely:

- The 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs;
- The 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances; and
- The 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Madam Speaker,

NADS, along with its various stakeholders, is also responsible for:

- National strategic planning and action planning to systematically and comprehensively address matters across the drug control spectrum;
- To monitor these efforts to ensure that they are in-line with industry best practices; and
- To facilitate the evaluation of these efforts to determine whether goals and objectives are being met.

Madam Speaker,

The Secretariat is currently continuing work towards the development of a new 5-year

strategic document that will reflect the required response to the changes that have evolved since the previous plan was developed.

This new 5-year plan will be guided by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) Hemispheric Plan of Action on Drugs 2021 – 2025.

The Plan of Action serves as a reference guide for designing national drug policies, programmes and projects, making it possible to align and generate synergies between the national agendas and the hemispheric agenda.

The latter taking into consideration commitments such as those in the outcome document of the 2016 Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the world drug problem and the Ministerial Declaration emanating from the 2019 Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

Madam Speaker,

To assist with this work, NADS, by design, was to house the National Drug Observatory. The Observatory, Madam Speaker, was to be the country's principle information and research unit

on drug matters that looked at trends such as the presence and use of new substances, new methods of use, new user populations.

It also assesses the effectiveness of our institutions in addressing drug-related problems, among other indicators, all in an effort to identify challenges, gaps and weaknesses in the national effort that must be addressed.

Sadly, Madam Speaker, NADS is now severely under-resourced, and this is reflected in its output over recent years. The last secondary

school drug prevalence survey, the primary vehicle that indicates what substances our precious children may be experimenting with or even abusing, that indicates if prevention efforts are paying off, the last survey was conducted in 2011.

Yet, we continue to invest in programmes and projects without any means of knowing if these were monies well spent. If they were positively impacting the situation.

Madam Speaker,

As a result, this Administration has allocated NADS **one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars (\$165,000)** in the 2022/2023 budget to conduct another Secondary School Drug Survey, hopefully this fall; if COVID allows for it and barring any other natural disasters that would decrease in-school attendance.

Madam Speaker,

As a reminder of our situation, allow me to share a bit of information from the 2011 survey. Results revealed that alcohol was, by far, the substance

of choice of Bahamian secondary school students, with usage rates showing a consistent increase between the 2002 and 2011 surveys.

Results by gender revealed that for the first time in recent years, the prevalence of alcohol consumption in female students surpassed those for males for both use in the past year and in the past month.

Also, 53 percent of those who drank within the month prior to the survey had engaged in one or more sessions of binge drinking which is the

consumption of five (5) or more drinks on any one occasion in the two weeks preceding the survey.

Regarding marijuana, compared to 2008, marijuana usage rates increased with more students having tried marijuana and more continuing to use. In 2011, 13.7 percent of all students had tried marijuana at least once in their lifetime.

Of the amount, 9.7 percent having used within the past year and 5 percent in the 30 days

immediately preceding the survey. The usage of other drugs was not popular among Bahamian secondary school students.

Madam Speaker,

In addition to the Secondary School Survey, attempts have been made to access funding for NADS to also conduct another National Household Drug Prevalence Survey during this budget period; the most recent being 2017.

This household survey will target the country's adult population, with results reflecting the

knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices of Bahamians across the archipelago.

This is most timely as it will tell us not only about the prevalence of use, but also factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of use and whether the attitudes and beliefs of Bahamians have changed and whether they are aligned with drug-related proposals that are being contemplated.

I should say here, Madam Speaker, that both of these surveys, as did the previous surveys,

utilizes the hemispheric questionnaires and methodology that was developed by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission. Utilizing these instruments allows for comparisons to be made with other countries in the Caribbean and the Americas.

Madam Speaker,

While the societal scourge resulting from the global opiate crisis has not been evident in The Bahamas, as yet, this is in no way a predictor of what the future may bring.

Many of the countries in our hemisphere, some on our borders, have acknowledged the growing abuse of opiate and other new psychoactive substances as among their leading health crises; impacting a segment of society that should be prime contributors to the economy and national development.

Consequently, Madam Speaker, we have to remain vigilant. We have to not only detect when the problem caused by any such substances is evident, through persons showing up for and being treated at our healthcare facilities, but we

have to be more intentional in our efforts to detect when these substances, pre-cursors or derivatives, arrive at our borders; before they become rooted in the drug culture and are abused.

Madam Speaker,

In the past, workshops have been held, webinars attended and a manual written to facilitate the establishment of Early Warning Systems. It is now time that we put the necessary resources in place to make this a reality.

Such Early Warning Systems are designed to more rapidly identify, monitor and respond to new drugs entering the market and any changes in consumption patterns of the more traditional drugs; in particular, new psychoactive drugs which are globally on the increase and pose a serious public health threat.

In addition, Madam Speaker, once the staffing shortfall is addressed, work will be ongoing through the National Drug Observatory in NADS to facilitate the more efficient production and collection of data from key producers, and to

ensure that such data are complete, accurate and timely, and are being used to guide policies and shape programmes.

Madam Speaker,

The United Nations Office on Drug and Crime recently released a research brief entitled, “*The Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions on homicide and property crime*”.

This article reflected the kind of information and analysis that I believe we must produce in order to move our efforts forward.

And, Madam Speaker, to do so, it simply requires our agencies doing those things just mentioned – to efficiently produce and collect data that are complete, accurate and timely and which is analysed.

Madam Speaker,

In regards to NADS, given the extreme economic challenges faced by The Bahamas, the key is going to be innovation. NADS, like most of our agencies, is not going to be able to do things as they have done in the past.

Now, more than ever, NADS will be required to adopt new strategies and technologies that will enhance both its efficiency as well as its effectiveness. Collaborations, inclusion, partnerships, etc., will, by necessity, become more than mere buzzwords. They will have to be the order of day.

Madam Speaker,

Before concluding my remarks on the National Anti-Drug Secretariat, it would be remiss of me not to publicly thank those international agencies that have invested heavily in capacity building

and other drug control efforts in this country. My

thanks is, therefore, extended to:

- The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of the American States;
- The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) of the US Department of State;
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime;
- The Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD) – funded by the European Union; and
- CARICOM

Madam Speaker,

This Davis-Cooper Administration remains committed to the fight against all forms of drug user in our society, particular our youth population.

We will invest the necessary financial and human investments, partnership with our national, regional and international partners, and, **YOU**, the general public to rid our streets and homes of illegal drug possession and use.

I, therefore, wish to thank the Director, Mr. Terrance Fountain and the hard working staff at the National Anti-Drug Secretariat for their commitment to service.

National Neighbourhood Watch Programme (NNWP)

Madam Speaker,

The National Neighbourhood Watch Programme (NNWP) is an initiative created to allow all Bahamians the opportunity to partner with the Government, the Police Force and private entities to actively participate in fostering a safer Bahamas.

Today, there are approximately 168 groups located on New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco, Exuma and Eleuthera. The ultimate goal is to close the gap between the police and the community.

Madam Speaker,

The Programme continues to find adaptive ways to expand and offer services in the midst the pandemic. Despite the challenges faced, many communities throughout The Bahamas remained engaged via virtual platforms.

Beyond hosting monthly meetings, the Council hosted several sessions with experts to help address the concerns being faced by members of the community during this unprecedented time. Inclusive of the topic sessions were:

- Anger management hosted by Eric Fox from Teen Challenge Bahamas;
- Domestic violence hosted in partnership with the Police Force;
- Conflict resolution hosted in partnership with the Police Force; and
- Prayer sessions in partnership with The Bahamas Christian Council

Madam Speaker,

In addition to the Council hosting activities to strengthen neighbourhoods, various watch groups, mainly, the Blue Hills NWG in partnership with the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) hosted a Disaster Preparedness Training for community leaders. Some of the topics covered were:

- Disaster preparedness
- Disaster medical operations
- Fire safety and utility controls
- Disaster psychology and
- Light search and rescue

Madam Speaker,

The Presidents in the Family Island along with their Liaison Officers held a number of activities to keep their communities involved, as well. There were Easter egg hunts, nature trail hikes, and movie nights for the youth.

Of importance to note was the Spanish Wells NWG which distributed care packages to the elderly and made a monetary donation to the Cancer Society of Eleuthera.

Madam Speaker,

The Royal Bahamas Police Force plays a pivotal role in the sustainability of the Programme.

Liaison Officers assigned to the Policing Divisions and, in partnership with the residents of the communities, developed several programmes to:

- Analyze crime trends;
- Conduct foot and mobile patrols, particularly in hot spots;
- Engage in community social events; and
- Work in partnership with civic and non-governmental organization to promote safety

During Police month, the Officers launched the, *'Ask a Cop over Coffee Series'*. This initiative was designed for Officers to hear the community concerns and forge a better relationship between the police and citizens and, it is expected to continue in the future.

Madam Speaker,

During the month of April, the Council celebrated its fourth (4th) anniversary with a Proclamation from the Prime Minister declaring the 30th April, 2022 as 'Neighbourhood Day'. The list of monthly activities to commemorate included:

- Church Service at Living Waters Kingdom Ministries;
- Launch of the Neighbourhood Community App in partnership with Think Simple;
- Community walk-about in two hotspot areas; and
- Basketball and pizza day in Sunlight Village Park

Madam Speaker,

The Bahamas National Neighbourhood Watch

Council seeks to provide its members with opportunities to share best practices and learn from other neighbourhood watch groups. As a

result, the Council joined Neighbourhoods USA in 2019.

Neighbourhoods, USA is a national, non-profit organization committed to building and strengthening neighbourhood organizations. The organization continues to encourage networking and information-sharing to facilitate the development of partnerships among neighbourhood organizations, government, and the private sector for the ultimate goal of strengthening every neighbourhood.

Last month a delegation from The Bahamas travelled to Little Rock, Arkansas to attend the 2022 conference under the theme *‘Neighbourhoods, the Fabric of Our Communities’*. The conference was designed to offer opportunities to share knowledge, gain experience, foster continued community support, and build capacity throughout The Bahamas.

Madam Speaker,

Of special mention, Jubilee Gardens Neighbourhood Watch, under the leadership of

President Debbie Lightbourn and Youth Officer Erin Stubbs, was a finalist in the Neighbourhood of the Year, Social Revitalization/Neighbourliness in a Single Neighbourhood and presented under the theme 'Christmas Amidst the Pandemic'.

Madam Speaker,

Despite being a young Council and only recently joining Neighbourhoods USA, The Bahamas is making an impact. During the conference two (2) delegates in the persons of Chairman, Mr. Keno Wong and President, Mrs. Debbie Lightbourn

were not only presenters during two sessions, but were appointed to the Board of NUSA.

These appointments signify the respect and importance of the work of the Neighbourhood Watch Council and Groups in The Bahamas.

Madam Speaker,

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Neighbourhood Watch Programme has been allocated **one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)** to continue its community outreach initiatives.

Projected activities for the new fiscal year include:

- Re-energizing dormant watch groups;
- Complete the processes associated with the 'Community App';
- Assist Family Islands with spay and neuter programme through partnership with The Bahamas Alliance for Animal Rights and Kindness (BAARK);
- Assist Neighbourhood Watch Groups with accessing grant funding through the Ministry;
- Expand and continue partnership with the Royal Bahamas Police Force, The Bahamas Christian Council, Think Simple, Aliv, Zonta, Crime Watch Bahamas, and other civic organizations;
- Host back to school give-ways; and

- Host youth summer jamboree, movie and family night.

Madam Speaker,

The Neighbourhood Watch Programme in partnership with the Police Force will continue to play a pivotal role in advancing safety throughout The Bahamas. The impact it is having since its establishment has extended beyond our borders and speaks to the success and necessity for the Programme.

It is expected that the community in partnership

with Police Liaison Officers will continue to hold hands with residents to implement and strengthen neighbourhoods, one community at a time.

In that vein, Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the National Coordinator, former Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mrs. Ismella Davis-Delancey, Chairman, Mr. Keno Wong, the Council, the Police Force and community members for their commitment to advancing safety in The Bahamas, one household at a time.

Madam Speaker,

As I conclude, I would like to thank all of the agencies and persons under my remit for their dedication to the advancement of safety and security in our nation. Their tireless efforts have not gone unnoticed by the Bahamian people or myself.

We have witnessed many accomplishments since September, 2021 and this 2022/2023 Budget will further facilitate our recovery, rebuilding and resilience as a nation. Therefore, let it be known that I, Wayne Munroe, Member of

Parliament for Free Town and Minister of
National Security supports this budget!

May God bless the people of the Commonwealth
of The Bahamas.

Thank you.

References

Darbouze, K. (n.d.). *Rehabilitative methods and the affect on juvenile delinquents*. University of Maryland: Inaugural Edition University of Maryland.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370–396.

ShotSpotter. (2018). *The benefits of ShotSpotter* Retrieved from Results - ShotSpotter
UNODC. (2020). *Rehabilitation and social reintegration of prisoners*. Retrieved from Prisoner Rehabilitation (unodc.org)