

## THRONE SPEECH

Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2013

Honourable President,

Honourable Members of the Nevis Island Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Government welcomes you to the first sitting of the Nevis Island Assembly since the Nevis Island Elections which were held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2013.

Over the past six years, our people, our country and our Constitution have been severely tested. All branches of government, the Judiciary, the Legislature and the Executive, indeed the very root of our democracy, have been challenged but through it all, our people have persevered.

My Government recognizes and understands that the legitimate expectation of a people for the fulfilment of their basic needs would always supersede the level of service that is provided by those in authority.

However, when the livelihood of a people is threatened, the people must choose. Our people have chosen to elect a new government to provide a new beginning, and a new direction for all of us.

My Government's task is not an easy one. Indeed, it will be a challenging one. As a party in Opposition, My Government campaigned on the state of the economy; fiscal management; the high cost of living;

the efficiency or lack thereof in the Civil Service; the Electoral System and the need for good governance. Having been elected to office and having completed a preliminary assessment of the state of affairs, My Government is now in a better position to fine tune its programmes to restore confidence and hope and to revitalize our island's economy.

As we examine and review the Nevis Island Administration, My Government is committed to addressing the major recurring issues which have plagued our island.

We recognize the need to apply creative ideas and policies to address the challenges of a rapidly changing economic environment. To this end, my government is committed to reducing our Public Sector debt, the exorbitant cost of living and the high levels of unemployment and underemployment.

My Government is committed to eliminating the systemic inefficiencies in the Administration and the inertia at the administrative level of all sectors of Government, to provide high quality and professional service.

To this end, My Government will institute on-going, sector-specific, training. Additionally, My Government recognizes the need for generic training in customer relations, leadership and management principles with an understanding of the General Orders of the Service.

The Civil Service must not continue to be a choice of convenience or patronage for political parties. Professionalism as an absolute necessity, must be restored as we conduct the peoples' business.

My Government shall strive throughout this term of office, to operate in an effective, stable and inclusive manner, providing high quality public services; vamp, retrain and re-tool the Civil Service whilst simultaneously reducing the size of government.

My Government has a sacred duty to create an enabling environment that would foster the growth of the Private Sector. To this end, My Government shall adopt measures that would diversify and strengthen our Private Sector.

It is the Private Sector upon which the transformation of our economy must rely. My Government, where it is appropriate, will seek to partner with the Private Sector as we seek to diversify our economy where a comparative benefit will be derived by our people in the provision of services.

My Government will also explore partnering with the private sector, recognizing of course, that not every service can be or ought to be privatized.

My Government is committed to the development and diversification of this critical sector and salutes those persons who make a living from agriculture, horticulture and fishing. My Government recognizes the immense challenges that they face and is committed to implementing strategies to overcome said challenges.

It is My Government's policy during this term of office, to address the need for increased food production and the diversification of crops and to satisfy the needs of our increasingly discerning tastes of our population and market. Critical to this policy, is the control of marauding animals, particularly monkeys, and it is My Government's intention to seek all available assistance, local and regional, to deal with this problem.

The development of agro-processing and abattoir services is critical if we are to, as far as is feasible, become self-sufficient in those areas in

which we have a proficiency to produce. The application of new technologies to improve the efficiency of the Agriculture sector, in order to meet the demands of the local market, will be one of the features of My Government's approach to Agriculture.

Further, My Government will pursue training and professional opportunities for the Nevisian farmer and our technicians in this sector. We recognize and thank the various regional and international agencies and governments that have assisted us over the years and intend to maintain and strengthen those links.

Tourism development has been one of the hallmarks of the economic life of our island. The promotion and branding of Nevis as an upscale destination, has reaped dividends over the years.

My Government's policy will vigorously pursue the promotion of Nevis as a preferred destination, capitalizing on our natural beauty and our historical features, in all the important markets. The pursuit of greater airlift is critical in this regard and my government is committed to establishing links with the neighbouring hubs.

Further, My Government recognizes that marketing must be in conjunction with a number of other activities to facilitate transformation of the sector. Consequently, My Government shall partner with the hotels and other stake-holders, to promote Nevis and to develop various activities which will serve to further enhance Nevis as a premiere destination among the niche market that we seek.

In tourism, we must maximize those features which will be to our greatest advantage in the competitive tourism market. Certainly, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society can ascend to higher heights and it is with this view that My Government shall partner with this

august body, to preserve and promote those historical features of Nevis which make our island an attractive destination.

My Government is already in discussions with investors who are interested and committed to the construction of major hotels and other up-scale tourism projects on the island.

It is the intention of My Government to ensure that the calibre of investment in this sector is complimentary to the maintenance of the niche market that has brought benefits to Nevis over the years.

My Government is committed to the provision of top quality educational options and economic opportunities for all Nevisians and for our youth in particular. To this end, my government intends to establish a Community College with the appropriate regional and international accreditation in various disciplines. My Government will continuously pursue educational opportunities at institutions of higher learning for our students, particularly in areas that are critical to the development of our island.

Recognizing the importance of education, My Government will dialogue with the professionals in the field with a view to ensure that the Education Policy is synchronized with our island's needs into the future.

My Government also recognizes the need to upgrade the physical plant in this Sector and is committed to ensuring that the facilities for both staff and students are of a standard that is conducive to learning and to achieving the goals that have been set.

My Government will continue to promote Nevis as a safe and reputable jurisdiction in which people can do business. In this highly competitive and sometimes volatile industry, it is critical that our Financial Services

Sector remains on the cusp of legislative and sectoral changes internationally.

In this regard, My Government will continuously review and update the existing legislative regime that governs this sector to ensure vigilance in its management. Where necessary, My Government will introduce relevant legislation. It is the intention of the My Government, to work closely with the various representative organisations in this sector to ensure a continued harmonized relationship.

My Government has already kept its promise to reduce the fuel surcharge on electricity, but will continue to ensure that NEVLEC functions in a manner that will reflect that institution's mandate to provide efficient and continuously improved service to the people.

Similarly, My Government's plan for the upgrade and improvement of water services will be borne out in the near term with new facilities for the storage and distribution of this critical resource.

My Government is currently reviewing the development of geothermal energy. As you are aware, this matter has been the subject of court action and my government will report in the short term on this matter.

My Government will focus in the near term, on maintenance and rehabilitative work on our major physical infrastructure. Continued road maintenance and village road construction will be a critical feature of this Ministry.

One of our major challenges is the provision of health care. My Government is convinced that we can do much better than we are doing. Our people are our most valuable resource, yet we are lagging behind in the provision of quality health care.

Our population demands more services, particularly for our elderly and our children. Our health services must also compliment our promotion and pursuit of high end tourism. Consequently, my government shall seek to partner with the private sector in the improvement of our health care delivery where possible and appropriate.

It is the intention of My Government to increase the complement of nurses in our health care institutions by providing the appropriate incentives for training.

Accordingly, continuous training of our nursing and medical staff will be a part of the upgrade and modernization of our healthcare services. My Government will upgrade, and/or refurbish our hospital and health centres, through direct government input as well as the assistance of donor agencies.

My Government shall seek to implement a health insurance scheme for all of our people. To this end, during its first term, my government shall initiate a Task Force to pursue the development and implementation of a health insurance programme.

It is commonly stated that the youth are our future. It is incumbent therefore upon us, to ensure that we capture the energy, resourcefulness and innovation that resides in our young. My Government is cognizant of the fact that, not only are our youth the future of our country but they are intrinsically connected to the future.

It is common knowledge that our young people are naturally gifted in many fields of endeavour. My Government is therefore committed to ensuring that opportunities are available to our young people to maximize their talents and skills in the areas of Science and Technology.

My Government will provide the appropriate incentives to and opportunities for young people to develop and pursue their entrepreneurial inclinations to start viable businesses. My Government will offer training in areas deemed to be priority areas for National development. To this end, My Government will institute an annual consultation with youth for the exchange of ideas and to further shape and refine government's youth policy.

In the area of Sport, My Government shall seek to maximise the talent and skills of our youth in various sporting disciplines. In addition to the traditional sporting endeavours of cricket, football and track, we shall pursue the development of gifted athletes in other disciplines, to ensure participation and performance at the highest levels of competition. My Government will vigorously pursue the improvement of sporting facilities throughout the island and the implementation of sporting programs for our youth.

In the area of Culture, My Government intends, through its cultural policy, to recapture that "Nevisianess" that we are beginning to lose to foreign influences.

To this end, My Government will institutionalize performing arts training at the school and community levels. Additionally, parish and island-wide competitions will be organized to re-establish our many cultural art forms and to augment our annual cultural festival, Culturama.

My Government also recognizes that the social aspects of our country have been eroded and that it is imperative that priority be given to restoring the fabric of our society.

In this regard, My Government will introduce and implement such social developmental programmes which will enable our people especially our



youngsters, to redirect their energies and their copious talents to such community based programmes to ensure a wholesome development at all levels.

In this regard, our community centres will become the hub for such social programmes and it is our intention to ensure that these centres are efficiently managed for the delivery of these programmes.

In order to accomplish this comprehensive development of all our communities, my government will ensure that an environment of peace and stability exists in our country.

It would be necessary to provide the Police and all persons entrusted to preserve the peace and safety of our citizens, with the necessary support and resources to achieve this most important objective....”a country where peace abounds”

It is the intention of my government to partner with the private sector and with supportive regional and international agencies to source the equipment and training to enhance the security and stability in our country, so that we can eliminate crime and violence and create the environment conducive to the increase in foreign and domestic investment for the creation of employment in our country.

My Government will intensify its marketing and promotion of our country to ensure that the name of Nevis is again synonymous with peace and tranquillity and that the unique historic and cultural aspects of our country are given full range, to diversify the economy so that there will be long term benefits for all who live here.

My Government recognizes the importance of Integrity in Public life and in Public office. My Government will therefore place a premium on the achievement of professionalism and integrity by all public officials

and it is my government's intention, to introduce the Integrity in Public Life Ordinance to guide the operations and functions of members of the Assembly and all employees, in the Nevis Island Government.

My Government is aware that increase in airlift is vital to the sustainability of the economy of our country. In this regard, My Government intends to pursue assiduously, discussions with all of the airlines which do business with Nevis with the objective of providing greater and easier direct access to and from Nevis.

The benefits from this policy will accrue to all the people who travel, but will more specifically benefit the Nevis Air and Seas Ports Authority and our Taxi Operators, who have invested to provide a service to our visitors.

It is for our people, that Government's policy must provide, so that their lives could be enhanced.

My Government will take a cautious look at the debt situation it has inherited. It is clear that the inordinate debt to GDP ratio and the high cost of debt servicing have had and continue to have a very negative effect on the ability of my government to provide services and to even contemplate any increased employment at this time.

However, it is conceivable that as my government pursues the expansion of the Tourism Industry, a renewed partnership with the private sector and the development and increased productivity in agriculture, there will be increased opportunity for the creation of employment for all people here in Nevis.

My Government is prepared to provide the necessary tax concessions to the private sector investors to expand their businesses so that they can increase employment in the short to medium term.

My Government recognizes that it has a responsibility to foster the development and the expansion of the small business to provide opportunity for our young entrepreneurs to participate in the economic development of our country. In this regard, My Government will source funds to increase the Small Enterprise Development Fund which will provide a source of capital for this purpose. It will seek to partner with SIDF in the effort to support young entrepreneurs and to encourage the young employment seekers to participate in the PEP initiative.

I have sought to set out some of the broad policy initiatives of my government which have been crafted to give a ray of hope for our citizens. In a few weeks, my Government will be presenting its budget for the year 2013, and in this budget my government will set out in more detail its plans and programmes to provide opportunities for its citizens.

In that budget, my government will also outline ways and means of ensuring that our people have a better outlook on life, and also seek to reduce their stress and strain, so that our people can have a better quality of life and be able to face the future with a greater degree of confidence.

The challenges are many, however, My Government is confident that it has the resources at hand to lead Nevis in the right direction and to achieve the goals that it has set for our people. This is a government that is open and ready and willing to partner with civil society and the private sector, to ensure that the task with which the people of Nevis have entrusted it will be accomplished. This is a government with new ideas and new approaches towards building a stronger and brighter Nevis.

May God bless us all and prosper our efforts to provide good governance and greater opportunity for all.