



**SPEECH
FROM THE THRONE**

By

His Excellency

Sir Clifford Husbands G.C.M.G., K.A.

June 6, 2003

INTRODUCTION

Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly:

The representatives of the House of Assembly have been elected.

The members of the Senate have been selected.

You have met, and have chosen your respective presiding officers.

The process of constituting Parliament for this new term is now duly completed.

In accordance with tradition, it now falls to me to outline my Government's programme for the first Parliamentary term of the twenty-first century.

FUNDAMENTAL NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

My Government approaches the business of this new Parliament, mindful of the legacy of our predecessors in these Chambers and deeply conscious of the responsibility which the people have chosen to repose in their representatives.

This Parliament will have to introduce and manage the most complex and far-reaching changes to our economy and society since Barbados has become an independent nation.

It will meet at a time of heightened concern for global peace and security and at a time when factors outside our borders and beyond our direct control will make more challenging our quest for full, sustainable and equitable development.

My Government reaffirms its commitment to the full development of our nation as a prosperous, stable and well ordered democracy, governed by the rule of law, and exemplified by the effective participation of all sectors, classes and creeds in all aspects of our political, social and economic affairs.

My Government reaffirms that our people, their gainful employment, the meeting of their needs and aspirations, and the full engagement of their creativity and enterprise, constitute our chief and highest purpose.

My Government is also conscious that Barbados is blessed with a fragile but invaluable resource in our environment, which we must sensitively use and protect for the benefit and enjoyment of this generation and generations of Barbadians to follow.

My Government accepts the responsibility to ensure that our nation functions in the global economy and the wider international society on terms of our choosing, in a manner that reflects and preserves our

Barbadian identity, and that reinforces the standing of Barbados as a nation whose voice is heard and respected among the community of nations.

My Government recommits itself to working in harmony with our neighbours in the Caribbean for the full and successful integration and upliftment of our region in all of its endeavours.

My Government reaffirms its fundamental commitment to freeing Barbados, to the extent humanly possible, from the scourge of poverty and the debilitation caused by HIV/AIDS, violence and lawlessness and illegal drugs.

To these ends, my Government will engage, as one of its first actions, to conclude and publish a National Strategic Plan.

ECONOMIC PROGRAMME AND POLICIES

Our people can only prosper if our economy is strong and the distribution of the proceeds of its growth and of wealth is fair.

My Government will implement macro economic policies to achieve average annual real economic growth of approximately 3%, in pursuit of the overall objective of reducing unemployment to negligible proportions.

My Government will give priority to measures that reduce the fiscal deficit to manageable proportions; and the public debt to 60% of GDP; maintain interest rates and energy prices at the lowest possible levels; contain inflation and boost our foreign exchange reserves to enable us to maintain the value of the Barbados dollar.

My Government will progressively remove exchange controls on capital transactions.

In the interest of perpetuating conditions for continued stability and competitiveness of the Barbadian economy, my Government will support wage and income settlements that are related to the capacity to pay, and that take productivity into account.

My Government recognises that the new trade arrangements will generate new opportunities for Barbados. Hence it will institute new policies to facilitate economic expansion through the export of Barbadian technology, intellectual and financial capital, enterprise, brands, and the products of our cultural industries.

It will also implement strategies to diversify our economies to take full advantage of new market niches that we can exploit because of the high quality of our human resource, the strength of our social capital, our location and our proven capacity to produce high quality services.

My Government will provide financial and technical assistance, capacity building and institutional support to assist existing Barbadian producers to reach and maintain world standards, and to create new competitive enterprises in every sector.

My Government will, in carrying out its capital programme, make increasing use of public-private sector investment partnerships, and “build- operate- and -transfer arrangements” as a means to control the size of the fiscal deficit and to generate new opportunities for private initiative and investment.

My Government will carry out the planned strategic partnerships for state owned financial institutions, the Barbados National Bank Inc. and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados Ltd. to enable them to develop as fully fledged financial institutions, offering a wide range of financial services to the public.

Recognising that the existence of excess liquidity in the financial system represents the under-utilisation of our people’s savings, my Government will support measures to broaden and deepen the development and operations of the financial and capital markets and institutions of Barbados, subject to the observance of the highest and soundest regulatory and supervisory standards.

My Government will provide protection and subsidies to our industries in all forms and up to the extent consistent with our obligations in regional, hemispheric and global trade and investment agreements.

PARTNERING WITH THE WORLD

My Government will give the most urgent priority to fulfilling its obligations, as stated in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, to fully implement the provisions for the Caribbean Single Market and Economy by 2004.

My Government will pursue deeper, broader and faster liberalisation with our Caribbean neighbours than with the rest of the world.

It will continue to participate actively in the negotiations to create the Free Trade Area of the Americas by 2005 and to put in place the trade provisions of the Cotonou Agreement between the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions and the European Union by 2007.

It will support the efforts to reform existing World Trade Organisation arrangements and to influence the fashioning of new rules to ensure the provision of special and differential treatment and adequate

transitional arrangements for small economies as a prerequisite for their participation in trade liberalisation.

In this dynamic international environment Barbados' diplomatic efforts must be devoted to negotiating the best terms of trade for our products and services; forging strategic alliances with like-minded states and non-traditional partners; and promoting and defending small states issues and concerns internationally.

My Government further recognises the need to maintain its international advocacy to ensure that new security priorities do not subvert the global development agenda. It reasserts the preeminence of multilateralism and will seek to play an active role in the United Nations system and in institutions which promote the interests of developing countries.

TAX AND FISCAL REFORM

My Government recognises the importance of continued fiscal and tax reform to provide incentives to spur personal initiative, encourage private investment, promote savings, support small business and enterprise development, and to boost real disposable incomes.

It is equally conscious that in this Parliamentary term our tax system must be so structured that on entering the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in 2005, Barbados will be a preferred location for doing business in the Caribbean, and that our tax system is designed to accommodate the full effects of trade liberalisation after 2005.

To achieve these objectives, my Government will fully carry out the programme for the reform of the Personal Income and Corporation Tax as set out in the Income Tax Amendment Act of 2003.

This programme will free the first \$25,000 of personal income from the payment of tax, reduce the personal income tax rates to 20% and 35%, and the corporation tax to 25% by 2007.

With the lowering of the corporation tax rate to 25% by 2006, my Government will adjust the tax rate for small businesses to 20% to ensure a continued preferential tax regime for this class of enterprise. It will also complete the Study for the convergence of the tax rate payable by domestic enterprises and those within the international business sector.

My Government will provide further relief in relation to land tax by exempting the first \$125 000 in property value from payment of tax and by capping the value on which the tax will be charged. Property Transfer Tax will be reduced from 10% to 7.5%. Further, leases which are for periods of less than 25 years will be exempt from the payment of both Property Transfer Tax and Stamp Duty.

My Government will after 2005 phase out import duties consistent with our undertakings under the FTAA, the Cotonou Agreement with Europe, and the WTO. This will induce a corresponding reduction in the incidence of the value added tax.

As a measure to spur productivity my Government will remove the VAT on computer equipment and supplies.

TOURISM AND THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

My Government envisions that the tourism industry will have to play an even greater and more catalytic role in the future development of the economy than it has in the past.

To meet this challenge, my Government will place emphasis on enhancing Barbados' capacity to offer a unique visitor experience in

which we are set apart from other destinations by the quality of our product and service.

Having already, through the Tourism Development Act , established a legal framework that offers attractive incentives to all aspects of the industry, my Government will further enhance the legislative support for the sector by enacting legislation to spur the development of time share properties, retirement villages, boating and yachting facilities and inland tourism.

My Government will inject an additional \$150 million to enable the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc, through selected joint ventures with the private sector, to greater enhance the quality and appeal of our tourism product and attractions through a number of projects encompassing the rehabilitation of our main town centres, and the redevelopment of the Dover-St Lawrence area.

My Government will support investment in a number of the Heritage Tourism projects, including the redevelopment of George Washington House, Fort Denmark and the West Wing of Parliament, and encourage private sector investment generally in the construction of new, high quality tourism capacity.

My Government will place emphasis on the development of community tourism, incorporating a significant number of new stakeholders in the industry and will continue to provide funding for the industry through the Tourism Loan Fund and the Small Hotels Investment Fund.

ENERGY

The provision of safe, reliable energy products at the lowest possible prices will continue to be the main focus of my Government's energy policy.

My Government will vigorously pursue the development of alternative, environmentally friendly energy sources by establishing a Centre of Excellence for Renewable Energy and constructing a wind farm at Lamberts, St. Lucy.

My Government will implement a programme to expand onshore and off-shore production of petroleum. It will construct a new \$80 million petroleum storage facility to undertake the importation and distribution of energy products.

An Energy Price Stabilisation Fund will be created to neutralise the volatility in fluctuation of crude oil prices.

Cognisant of the tremendous demand for natural gas commercially and residentially, my Government will implement the \$30 million capital programme, recently started, to double the number of households with access to natural gas from the current 13, 000 to 26,000.

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

My Government is committed to establishing Barbados as a premier centre for the production and export of competitive high quality services regionally and internationally, taking advantage of the expanded market access which will be provided by the CSME, the FTAA and the WTO. It will seek to maintain dynamism in the financial services sector whilst pursuing the rapid diversification of the non-financial and professional services sector.

My Government will deepen and strengthen local participation in all aspects of the international business sector.

My Government will continue to expand the range of Double Taxation Treaties and Bilateral Investment Treaties. It will also establish a dedicated legal unit with the support of the private and public sectors, to ensure that Barbados' legislative and policy framework for the sector constantly retains its competitive edge.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

My Government envisions that manufacturing will continue to be a major contributor to national output as well as an area of opportunity for small and medium enterprises.

It recognises that a new business class, comprised of new competitive enterprises engineered for efficiency and high productivity and focused towards production for local and regional markets must be supported.

My Government will seek to secure the market position of the sector by continuing to provide protection in all forms up to a level consistent with our international obligations, and by expanding the buy-local campaign as well as the resources available to the joint Public/Private Sector Export Trading Enterprise.

It will expand the financial resources of the Industrial Investment and Employment Fund and the Technical Assistance Programme to upgrade the production competitiveness in areas such as international quality standards and intellectual property protection for locally manufactured products.

Recognising that there are certain special products which are readily identified with Brand Barbados and which offer unique opportunities for niche production and marketing, my Government will provide specific programmes of assistance for the Rum, Food & Beverage, and Solar Water Heater sectors all of which have high potential for continued success in the new regional and international environment.

A FINANCIAL CHARTER FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

My Government recognises that access to development financing at concessional terms is essential if small business activity is to expand and new entrepreneurs are to be attracted. It will further strengthen the institutions established for that purpose and will express the future relationship between government financial institutions and the

small business sector in the publication and implementation of a Financial Charter for Small & Medium Enterprises.

The Charter will provide for the expansion of resources available to Fund Access and the Enterprise Growth Fund. It will double the maximum loan size as well as the repayment period while reducing the cost of borrowing to the micro-enterprise sector from the present 11.5% to 6%. My Government will encourage greater openness and transparency of operating at its funding agencies.

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR

My Government will continue the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector by introducing competition in the provision of both domestic and international telephone services and ensuring that there is a wider range of telecommunication services available to the public.

CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

My Government will implement a range of new policies to develop the cultural industries to their full potential in pursuit of the objective of building a creative economy.

It will also create new institutional arrangements such as a National Gallery of Art, a Film and Media Commission, a Festival and Events Bureau, a Cultural Archive and Registry Institute, and a Commission for Heritage Research and Preservation to support the development of this sector.

A Public-Private Sector Company to co-ordinate the marketing and distribution outside of Barbados of all of our cultural products and services will be set up.

Queens Park Gallery and Theatre as well as the Empire Theatre will be refurbished as central venues for cultural activities.

Conscious of the extent to which the Barbadian identity and way of life are being negatively influenced, my Government will continue to take initiatives designed to protect traditional Barbadian cultural values which reinforce our sense of self while fostering a tolerance for cultural diversity.

Legislation supporting the establishment of a Sports and Cultural Endowment Fund will be introduced early in this new term.

COMMERCE, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

My Government will complete the legislative framework and provide all necessary financial and institutional support for the creation of a market driven competitive economy.

A Computer Misuses Act, a Data Protection Act and regulations for an Electronic Transactions Act will be introduced. Financial and other institutional support will also be provided to enable a strong and vigorous consumer movement to take root and flourish as part of the market economy.

After full consultation, my Government will also amend the Cooperative Societies Act. This will strengthen the regulatory framework for Credit Unions whose membership has more than doubled, whose assets more than trebled and whose total savings quadrupled in the last decade.

Modern prudential standards to better protect the savings and assets of members will be introduced.

Greater use will also be made of the Fair Trading Commission in the regulation of a wider category of public utilities and public services.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In an age, where to a greater extent than ever before, economic systems and entire societies are being shaped by technological factors, my Government is committed to increasing the emphasis placed on Science and Technology. It will refashion the National Council for Science and Technology within the context of a new legislative framework for the sector.

My Government will ensure that resources, available to the public, private sector, and tertiary educational institutions, equivalent to 1.5% of GDP are used to support the development and application of science and technology for economically and socially productive purposes.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

My Government recognises the qualitative importance of agriculture to national development, and its vital contribution to food security, to the earning and saving of foreign exchange, to employment generation, environmental protection and to the stability of our rural society.

My Government will support the programme of reform to **save** our sugar industry, and to transform it from being an exporter of a primary product to become a producer of a branded specialty product.

My Government will give strong support for the concentration of our productive efforts on those commodities for which there is strong domestic demand, like the Poultry and Pig Industry or those with unique Barbadian characteristics and for which there is an external market.

My Government will support the development by the private sector of an integrated cotton industry producing West Indian Sea Island Cotton products for the global market.

Similarly, my Government will seek to increase the production of the Black Belly Sheep by marketing it as a signature product within the tourism sector while protecting it as a national genetic resource. It will

also support the initiatives of the dairy industry to introduce a new marketing arrangement for pricing and supply consistent with the principles enunciated by the Fair Competition Act.

A new Agricultural Development Bill will be enacted. Additional resources to finance agricultural transformation will be provided through the recently established Agricultural Development Fund.

The Barbados Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation will be converted from being a state trading monopoly to an agri-business organisation charged with facilitating greater investment in the sector.

The State will continue to give effect to its commitment of allowing at least 60 percent of the purchases of selected food items by public institutions to be met by the local farming community.

The Land for the Landless Programme will be significantly expanded by 2007 and a package of technical support services provided to participating farmers. \$7 million will be spent on an irrigation project over the next three years to alleviate the greatest constraint facing the viability of the industry.

In recognition of the fact that the Scotland District covers one-seventh of our land size, my Government will invest a further \$60 million during the next term to support the agricultural development and rehabilitation of the region.

The twenty-first century demands of us an even greater reliance on the economic exploitation of our marine environment. Some 6,600 Barbadians currently work in the fishing industry. There is however room for significant expansion in this sector.

My Government will vigorously promote a Regional Fisheries Regime in which our fisherfolk and their Caricom counterparts will be allowed to share in the sustainable exploitation of the living resources of the Caribbean Sea. It will also update the incentive programme to support not only investment in larger and more modern fishing vessels and fish harvesting techniques, but also in the provision of ancillary facilities.

My Government will also build a new fishing facility at Six Men's, St. Peter and a "Sea Food City" at the old abattoir site in Bridgetown while refurbishing older facilities at Oistins and Bridgetown.

My Government remains convinced that if we are to achieve the objective of full national development, we must ensure that we build a strong and vibrant rural economy and society.

In this term, therefore, it will give priority to the expansion of economic opportunities by applying at least fifty percent of the financial resources of the Rural Development Commission to the creation of sustainable rural enterprises. The Rural Enterprise Fund, the Livestock Development Fund and the Fruit Orchard Development Fund will be expanded and training programmes intensified to assist small entrepreneurs in this regard.

In addition, the market decentralisation programme will be continued through the construction of vending facilities at Six Roads, Redman's Village, Belleplaine, Bathsheba, Jackson, Crab Hill, Gemswick and Gall Hill, St John. The management of the community market facilities will be divested to communities and citizens.

My Government is committed to continuing its programmes to upgrade housing for the rural poor, as well as adequate street lighting for the protection and safety of the residents.

LIFE-LONG LEARNING

The development of Barbados' most valuable resource, the talents of our people, is fundamental to my Government's central objective of transforming Barbados into a fully developed society in the shortest possible time.

To meet this goal requires of us bold and revolutionary change at every tier of our educational system to cater to every need and to develop every capacity to its full potential.

My Government remains unreservedly committed to the Edutech Programme. It will complete the implementation of the new curriculum at the primary and secondary levels; institute a system of continuous assessment so that a child's performance over a four year period will constitute forty percent of the overall "eleven plus" assessment, and finalise the process for the issuing of a new modular Barbados Diploma of Secondary Education.

It will also complete the final phase of the refurbishment of the school plant and will develop partnerships with PTA's and other interested NGO's to maintain the refurbished plant. It will also provide the remaining technological and other tools to support the learning process in both educational and vocational studies.

My Government will ensure that all of our children of pre-school age have access to early childhood education.

It will expand and strengthen the facility for training at Erdiston Teachers Training College at all levels through partnerships with internationally renowned universities.

My Government is firmly committed to the goal of having at least one university graduate in every family by the year 2020.

My Government will continue to meet the tuition costs of Barbadians attending the University of the West Indies and will fully support the development programme at Cave Hill to make it a centre of excellence.

The major new initiative that will be undertaken in education during the life of this Parliament will be creation of a University College of Barbados. This will lead to the rationalisation of the relationship between the existing tertiary institutions, and by broadening the scope for training, will allow us to fully meet our existing and projected training requirements.

My Government will extend the Parent Volunteer Support Programme to all primary schools, and will, in partnership with the NGO Community, establish a Centre for Behavioural Adjustment to cater to

children with serious problems. It will expand the Special Needs Education Programme to meet the needs of the physically and mentally challenged, and those possessed with special skills.

My Government recognises that our young people are our nation's most precious asset. It will continue to execute programmes to provide basic training at the community level for 2000 young people per year in a range of sports and cultural disciplines. The work of the Block Committee will be expanded to further develop and implement programmes for integrating marginalised young people into the mainstream of society. The Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme and its Juniors Programme will be expanded, and a National Task Force will be set up to advise on the establishment of a National Youth Service.

SPORTS

My Government will continue to place high emphasis on sport as a developmental and economic tool. It will accelerate the programme to provide every major community with modern recreational facilities.

My Government will support the plans of the Barbados Cricket Association to develop Kensington Oval and its environs to international standards to make Barbados an attractive venue for the

hosting of the 2007 World Cup matches. The National and Netball Stadiums will be redeveloped and modernised to bring them up to world standards.

A new common service facility will be built on the grounds of the National Sports Council headquarters to serve as a Secretariat for sporting organisations which now operate without an office or home.

HEALTH CARE

My Government regards access to health care as a fundamental right of every Barbadian, and accepts that it should be funded principally through the public finances as an investment in our people and our social capital.

In this Parliamentary term the principal initiative that will be undertaken by the Government will be the substantial upgrade of the physical structure of the QEH and a major change in its institutional culture.

My Government will implement the arrangement for the affairs of the QEH to be administered by a Board of Management, with appropriate provision for the protection of the rights and interest of its staff. The physical expansion of the Hospital will encompass and increase its

patient capacity, and the upgrade of the departments of Cardiology, Oncology and Neuroservices.

The provision of quality nursing services remains at the core of an efficient and caring public health system. My Government will train nurses in sufficient numbers and in appropriate specialities to fully meet local needs, cognisant of the global demand for such services. Facilities and working conditions for nurses will be improved. A Department of Nursing Research will also be established.

In recognition of the importance of the polyclinics in our system of health care, their opening hours will be extended and a new one will be constructed at Gall Hill, St. John.

My Government will also introduce at an early date new initiatives in chronic diseases, dental health and mental health. It will also place heightened and additional emphasis on care for our elderly and for the health care of our nation's children.

In the first year of the nationally expanded HIV/AIDS programme, deaths in clinic patients have been reduced by 56 percent and hospital days have fallen by 59 percent. Buoyed by this already clear success, my Government will intensify its programme of prevention, treatment and care while focusing on converting the current

discrimination against persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS to a positive, caring support from the entire national community.

My Government will support the private sector to make the St. Joseph's Hospital the first tourism related International Medical Centre in the Caribbean, with an estimated investment of US \$35 million.

The Barbados Drug Service is unique in the Western Hemisphere and has served as a model for various countries. It is however now in need of reform. My Government will carry out such reform and make certain that it fully meets the needs of the client class for which it is intended.

My Government will execute a solid waste management programme in accordance with international best practices.

It will implement a "total options" solution which includes waste diversion using recycling, the breakdown of commercial and household waste to produce commercial quality compost and gas to generate electricity, incineration, and a sanitary landfill at Greenland.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The eradication of poverty is an achievable goal for Barbados, and remains the first priority of the Social Transformation Agenda. My Government will continue to vigorously pursue its Poverty Eradication Programme, placing greater emphasis on erasing the remaining causes of poverty, namely powerlessness, lack of skills and inadequate access to financial and other basic resources.

My Government will earmark 50% of the resources allocated to the Urban Development Commission for enterprise development within low-income communities.

It will provide funding to properly organised Community Based Organisations to support their enterprise initiatives and will expand the Poverty Fund and the Welfare to Work Programme.

Special assistance will be provided through the Urban Renewal Programme for the purchase of house spots for those persons who cannot afford to pay for their portion of the land.

Some 2000 derelict properties will be converted into new housing solutions and a comprehensive Community Upgrade Project will be executed to transform Cats Castle, Greenfields, Nelson Street, New Orleans and the Barracks

My Government will undertake a community-facility divestment programme to transfer the operation of government facilities such as markets and resource centres to the control of Community Based Organisations.

My Government is committed to ensuring that there is no digital divide in Barbados. It will expand the community information technology programme to provide computer training and Internet access to as many communities as practicable.

My Government is committed to the creation of a society for all ages, and within that society, to the protection of its most vulnerable groups - the children, the elderly the disabled and the homeless. It will produce and implement a National Policy for Children. Transitional housing, counselling and life skills training for adolescents leaving residential care will also be made available. It will also make the reporting of child abuse mandatory and encourage in-camera hearings for incidents of indecent sexual assault.

My Government will establish a National Meals on Wheels Programme, complete the Vauxhall Senior Citizens' Village and Day Care Facilities and construct others in the centre and the north of the island.

Senior Citizens Safety and Protection legislation will also be enacted. Within the context of its National Disability Policy and Programme, my Government will encourage self reliance among persons with disabilities through skills training, and by offering opportunities for enterprise development.

Disability Organisations will be strengthened, transportation services improved and restrictive barriers to employment and facilities removed. A Special Envoy for Persons with Disabilities will be appointed to represent their interests and concerns in local and international fora.

THE ENVIRONMENT

The management of the environment will receive special attention by my Government and stringent environmental codes will be applied to development projects in the public and private sectors.

Barbados' way of life and its sustainable economic development is inextricably linked to the preservation of our coastal and marine environment. My Government will, with the support of an IDB Loan, implement a \$98.4 million coastal infrastructural and protection programme.

My Government reaffirms its commitment that our beaches must be accessible by all. Legislation regulating beach accretion will be introduced early in this parliamentary term.

Recognising the right of everyone to clean air and having regard to the increasing incidence among our population of respiratory problems, a national air quality monitoring programme will be implemented.

My Government will develop and implement protocols for the sustainable use of our gullies by our communities and our visitors. It will also seek to protect sites of special ecological significance, such as our sand dunes, our wetlands and our remaining forested areas and ensure that they are not the subject of arbitrary commercial activity and development.

My Government will establish the first National Botanical Gardens at Waterford.

The redevelopment of Harrison's Cave at a cost of \$7.6 million will also be undertaken.

My Government will enact new environmental protection legislation.

PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT

There are some 100 000 vehicles on our roads today. This underscores the need for an upgraded, modernised and expanded national road system.

My Government will continue the national highway rehabilitation and construction programme, the principal element of which will be the expansion of the ABC Highway from two to four lanes.

My Government will accelerate the programme to ensure that every major community has a paved road by the end of the first decade of this century.

My Government will support a Park and Ride system and will give encouragement to the introduction of water transportation facilities to link Bridgetown with Oistins, Holetown and Speightstown.

A National Transport Authority will be established to enable it to coordinate and regulate public transport.

WATER

A safe, reliable and adequate water supply is one of the greatest challenges facing Barbados. My Government will bring the operation of the desalination plant to full capacity, will explore the feasibility of building two additional plants and will support the capital development

programme of the BWA to improve the water supply network of Barbados.

Work on the West Coast Sewerage Project will be initiated during this Parliamentary term.

HOUSING THE NATION

Fully housing the nation stands out as an urgent imperative. My Government will seek to accomplish this by a combination of measures - facilitating access to land at affordable prices; increasing the number of housing solutions to low and lower middle income persons through public sector and joint venture partnerships; addressing the issue of security of tenure, and through new housing financing initiatives.

With the assistance of the private sector, my Government through the National Housing Corporation will develop for sale 10 000 housing solutions with priority being given to first time homeowners in the lower and middle-income bracket.

My Government will accelerate the sale of its rental units and lots to tenants. The programme will commence in June 2003 to be

completed within three years. Tenants will be offered incentives to encourage them to purchase their units and lots.

Access to affordable finance is a critical component of my Government's housing programme. Consequently, it will expand the loan limit under the first time home owners programme, such that persons may access 100 percent mortgages at 6 percent interest up to \$150 000 with the qualification base moving from a salary of \$3 000 per month to \$4 000.

An additional \$30 million will be injected into the General Workers Loan Fund.

The Housing Credit Fund will be made a legal entity and will function as a fully-fledged secondary mortgage market institution under the administration of the Central Bank. It will be recapitalised through the issuance of National Housing Bonds under government guarantee.

Over the past twenty years the Tenancies Programme has had a tremendous transforming effect across Barbados, conferring not only the right to purchase, but also, the right to development. In the next term, some 5 000 tenants will benefit from purchasing their rented lots at the subsidised rates of \$2.50 per square foot under the recent amendments to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. Further

amendments will enable single lot tenants renting for more than 20 years to purchase a lot from the Crown in the event of their being evicted.

My Government will enact legislation providing for minimum standards for rental accommodation.

My Government will provide the necessary financial and human resources to complete the computerisation and the full functioning of the Land Registry.

A new Building Code will be introduced and enforced to improve the quality of our housing stock.

The creation of Town Centres as a means of bringing vital services to local communities is essential for balanced and equitable development. My Government's strategic goal is to establish a main civic centre in each parish by the end of the first decade of the twenty first century.

LABOUR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Barbados' stable industrial relations climate has contributed substantially to the nation's social and economic development. The effects of trade and economic liberalisation and the impact of new

technologies are however creating circumstances which have the potential to undermine the stability of employer/employee relationship.

My Government after consultation with the stakeholders, will carry out a legislative programme that will include the enactment of Employment Protection, Occupational Safety and Health, Trade Union Recognition, Sexual Harassment, and Minimum Wages Legislation as well as amendments to modernise the Holiday with Pay Act and the Shops Act.

In the area of technical and vocational training, my Government will implement the National Vocational Qualification System.

It will also increase the number of training opportunities to a wider cross section of the Barbadian public from its resources and will support the Private Sector with respect to its initiatives for training at the Enterprise level.

PENSION REFORM

My Government will carry out a programme of reform to assure the financial viability of our Social Security System well into the second half of the twenty-first century.

It will also enact early in this term an Occupational Pensions Act to regulate private pensions. It will review and amend the pension arrangements in the Public Sector acting upon the report of the Public Service Pension Review Committee.

PUBLIC SERVICE

My Government is committed to making the Public Service of Barbados fully efficient and effective, a genuine meritocracy, and the Government a model employer.

My Government will enact a new Public Service Act early in this term, and will complete the Job Reclassification exercise for the entire public sector.

My Government will establish an e-Government Task Force to develop a plan of action to chart the full transition for government to deliver its services to citizens and to perform its functions by electronic means.

My Government will negotiate two-year wage settlements for public servants and will systematically improve the physical and environmental conditions under which our public officers work.

JUSTICE PEACE AND SECURITY

Barbados is confronted in today's world with a range of non-traditional threats to our security and stability. We will not yield to these threats.

My Government is committed to ensuring that Barbados remains a safe and peaceful society; to creating the conditions for the full attainment of social justice; enforcing strict accountability under the rule of law; instilling in our citizens a sense of social responsibility; reinforcing traditional cultural and spiritual values; and providing timely and affordable access to legal justice.

My Government will implement the recommendations of the National Plan on Justice, Peace and Security which has been prepared by the National Commission on Law and Order.

It will continue to strengthen the Royal Barbados Police Force to enable it to effectively discharge its responsibility to the society.

Emphasis will be placed on enhancing the capacity of the Force through training, and on creating partnerships between the Police Force and communities through the establishment of Parish Committees to assist in maintaining the peace and fighting crime.

The independent Police Complaints Authority will become fully operational this term.

My Government will also continue the program to refurbish and modernise the police stations and accommodation.

My Government will bring the new Forensics Centre fully into operation. It will introduce a Forensics Procedures Act and a DNA Investigations Act.

There has been a substantial increase in both the number and the range of legal matters involving the Government of Barbados. My Government will restructure the Chambers of the Office of the Attorney General to address these new realities.

A new Legal Profession Act will also be introduced pursuant to the policy recommendations of a Committee established to review the functioning of the legal profession.

A National Prosecution Service responsible for all public prosecutions will be created.

The National Task Force on Crime Prevention will be converted into a National Criminal Justice Planning and Research Unit to conduct

research on a continuous basis to better inform policy to reduce and prevent crime.

My Government will undertake a programme to modernise the justice system. In particular, it will implement a computerised integrated justice information system (JITS) to link the Police, the Prison Service, the Courts, the Immigration, Customs and Probation Departments.

The construction of the new Judicial Centre at Whitepark Road as a public-private sector partnership will commence shortly.

The Caribbean Court of Justice Act will be proclaimed. Upon the inauguration of the Court it will become our final Court of Appeal.

My Government will enact a new Court Process Act and will upgrade and modernise the Court Process Department.

My Government will expand the range of areas for which members of the public may access legal aid and will establish Community Legal Aid Clinics in partnership with the Law Faculty of the University of the West Indies.

My Government will preserve Barbados' international reputation for the highest integrity in relation to the operation of its financial sector.

It will strongly support, within the context of public international law and in collaboration with regional and multi-lateral institutions of which we are members, the fight against terrorism, money laundering, drug trafficking, illegal gun-running and other similar threats to our stability and security.

In the area of penal reform, my Government will establish a Department of Corrections to provide a framework for the coordinated and integrated delivery of penal services.

It will implement a modern system of parole and conditional day release to provide for the more effective reintegration of prisoners who are no risk into the mainstream of society.

My Government will construct a modern facility for juvenile offenders at Dodds/Summervale and address long standing physical deficiencies at Glendairy Prison.

My Government will modernise the institutions that provide important services to the civil society.

The Immigration Department of Barbados is being required to play a more pivotal role in national development and national security than at any other stage in its existence.

My Government will introduce modern Immigration and Citizenship legislation in full compliance with new international security requirements, as well as to meet the country's obligations in respect of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy.

My Government will modernise the Barbados Postal Services. It will offer an attractive range of new services while providing a reliable and speedy delivery of the post. The Post Office will be converted into its own corporate entity to be run along commercial lines.

My Government will establish a National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to replace and expand substantially the functions now carried out by CERO.

My Government believes that the scourge of drugs must be treated primarily as a health problem.

Drug Courts, which will provide a holistic approach to the treatment of drug offenders, and a modern Drug Rehabilitation Facility will be established.

My Government will support the completion of the programme to recapitalise and restructure the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation to enable it to offer a wider and more attractive range of services with greater local and regional content.

Additional free to air licences will be issued during this term.

My Government will restructure the Government Information Service to enable it to more effectively meet the information and educational needs of Barbados.

GOVERNANCE

My Government will modify our forms of governance to better meet the needs of our changing society, to protect our sovereignty and to respond to non-traditional threats to our security.

My Government reaffirms its faith in the values that define the character of our nation.

It restates its commitment to integrity in all areas of governance and public life. It will ensure that there is transparency and effective mechanisms of accountability, not only in the public sector, but across the private sector and Civil Society.

It asserts that Parliament must retain its central role as a balance against the Executive.

It will continue to uphold an independent judiciary as the critical bastion for the interpretation of the law and the settlement of disputes, and the dispensation of justice to all.

My Government will introduce a Public Accounts Committee Bill as the very first Bill before the new Parliament to bring greater accountability and transparency to the affairs, not only of Central Government, but also of statutory and corporate entities in which government has an interest.

My Government will also subject itself to extra-parliamentary scrutiny by the creation, where appropriate, of Commissions of Enquiry to investigate the full facts and circumstances surrounding its actions and investments.

The Social Partnership born out of a need to stabilise the economy, has been transformed into a developmental mechanism. It has become a model of good governance acclaimed by the international community.

My Government will entrench The Social Partnership in our Constitution and will expand its scope as a mechanism for consultation and decision-making in all key areas of our governance.

My Government will strengthen the Charter of Rights for the better functioning of Civil Society. It will also introduce legislation to make private citizens and entities liable, as is already the case with the State, for discriminating in any form against one another.

My Government remains committed to Barbados' transition to a Republic within the Commonwealth; with a native son or daughter always as our Head of State; and with the supremacy of the people impregnably enshrined in our centuries-old tradition of parliamentary democracy.

In this term, my Government will settle and implement the key elements of our Republican form of government and Parliamentary Reform. We will proceed to a new constitution of our independent sovereign state that is a proclamation of the people and the Parliament of Barbados and not that of the United Kingdom.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate:

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

My Government is undaunted by the challenges that confront us as a nation. It is confident about the capabilities and creativity of the Barbadian people and their preparedness to make the most of the opportunities that surround us.

In this era of globalization, it reaffirms the critical role of the State in the transformation of Barbados – to keep people at the centre of our development; to ensure equity and social justice; to strengthen the national identity; to continue building social capital; to guide the creation of a new information and services-based economy; and to play an entrepreneurial role by partnering productive investment where risks may be too high and returns too low for private enterprise to do it alone.

My Government is confident that with God's good grace and with the support of our people the development programme that I have outlined will be successfully carried out and that our nation's future will be brighter and better as a result.

I extend to you my best wishes for a successful Parliamentary Session and pray the blessings of Almighty God upon your deliberations.

Governor General

Government House

BARBADOS

June 6, 2003