

COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DELIVERED AT THE

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

BY

HIS EXCELLENCY SIR ARTHUR FOULKES
GOVERNOR-GENERAL

WEDNESDAY 14TH APRIL, 2010

10:00 A.M.



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Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of
Assembly,

Today's Opening of Parliament comes just beyond the midpoint of my Government's third non-consecutive term in office.

My Government is firmly committed to the thorough modernization of government and the delivery of improved public services.

The spirit and urgency of reform drives and informs my Government's responses to the fervent dreams and pressing needs of the Bahamian people.

My Government's vision is built on the ideals of opportunity and responsibility, fairness and equality, accountability and transparency.

To advance this vision my Government will place before you an ambitious legislative agenda of reform and modernization.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of
Assembly,

Acutely conscious of the need to establish a timelier labour dispute mechanism, my Government will place before you legislation to simplify and make more effective employment dispute adjudication and determination.

As good and marketable title to land are essential to economic empowerment, my Government will place before you a Land Adjudication Bill to permit the certification of fee simple title to generation and commonage lands.

Also, legislation will be put before you for a Law of Property Act and for a Registered Land Act.

Legislation for a Bahamas Financial Services Authority will be placed before you.

Legislation for a new Securities Act will be placed before you.

Legislation will be placed before you for a Small and Medium Size Business Development Act.

Legislation will be placed before you for a Contractors Act.

Legislation to modernize and simplify probate of estates will be placed before you.

Legislation will be placed before you to amend the Road Traffic Act inclusive of the elimination of Act Insurance and its replacement by full Third Party Insurance.

Legislation for a number of new medical and health related matters will be placed before you, namely: a new Medical Act, a new Dental Act, and a new Nurses Act.

Legislation to repeal the Hotel Corporation Act will be placed before you.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

In furtherance of my Government's commitment to the development of the talents of our young people, legislation will be placed before you to provide for the creation of a National Sports Authority.

Legislation will be placed before you to incorporate The Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute for the purpose of improving and enhancing opportunities for career-oriented training.

Legislation will be placed before you to amend the Antiquities, Monuments and Museum Act and the Merchant Shipping Act to incorporate the principles of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, such as shipwrecks and recovery of underwater cultural heritage objects. When enacted the moratorium on salvage of historic wrecks will be lifted.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

Many provisions in the Penal Code and in the Criminal Procedure Code are relics from a bygone period. My Government will therefore place before you legislation to enact a new modern Penal Code and a new updated Criminal Procedure Code.

A number of persons, who commit crimes, do so whilst on bail pending trial for other offences. An amendment to the Bail Act will be placed before you to further restrict the right to bail for persons charged with serious crimes, and to limit the circumstances under which bail may be granted.

Legislation will be placed before you to repeal and replace the existing Magistrates Court Act.

A new Coroners Act will be placed before you.

Legislation will be placed before you to repeal and replace the antiquated 1943 Prisons Act.

Legislation will be placed before you to amend the Legal Profession Act to facilitate more expeditious disciplining of errant attorneys.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

My Government has a longstanding commitment to good, effective and open governance.

A Freedom of Information Bill meant to enhance transparency and accountability and to provide the Bahamian people and the media with greater access to government decision-making and actions will be placed before you.

In furtherance of its efforts to continue to reform and modernize the Public Service, my Government will place before you a new Public Service Act.

Legislation will be placed before you to amend the Parliamentary Elections Act.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

My Government is pleased to have provided significant international and regional leadership with regard to environmental protection and climate change which threatens our way of life and our economic development.

To further bolster our environmental defences and combat the dire effects of climate change, legislation will be placed before you to make enforcement of various international obligations and domestic laws more vigorous and effective.

Legislation will be placed before you to impose levies on the disposal of carbon-polluting items such as motor vehicles, tires, appliances and other items.

Legislation will be placed before you to amend The Bahamas National Trust Act.

Legislation will be placed before you for a Forestry Act and for a Protected Trust Fund Act, the latter to support the protection and maintenance of the biodiversity within the Protected Area System of The Bahamas.

An Animal Control and Protection Bill to improve protection and control of animals will be placed before you.

Madam President and Honourable Senators,
Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

My Government continues to reform and modernize laws related to our more vulnerable citizens. In this regard legislation will be placed before you to enact the Good Samaritan (Food Donation) Act.

Legislation will be placed before you to enact the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities) Act.

I pray the blessings of Almighty God may rest upon your deliberations.