

**Throne Speech made at the Nevis Island Assembly
by the Acting Deputy Governor General for Nevis
Her Honour Marjorie Morton
on January 30, 2018**

My Government welcomes you to the first sitting of the Nevis Island Assembly since the Nevis Island Elections which were held on the 18th December 2017.

Introduction

It is with the immense confidence that you have shown in your CCM led Party in government that I present this Throne Speech as the road map for the next five years as we continue to build on the foundation which has been laid whilst strengthening the architecture for the future growth and development of Nevis.

The people of Nevis can glean from our record that when we put people first, whatever the circumstances, we are able to adapt and turn threats into opportunities for the better. This is and has always been the hallmark of CCM led Administrations. This is how my government shall continue to operate for and on behalf of the people of Nevis. My government commits that it will ensure that in all our development we shall always put our people first. Our people are a committed and capable people and we must insist that they be given every opportunity in this their own land.

Mr. President, I wish to remind us all that the campaign is now over as campaigning was only for a short season. Governance now must take center stage. Having fought hard to win the election, we must now settle down to the really hard work of building Nevis. The CCM Party has won the war of ideas in an election. As a government we must now win the peace of good governance and development. While 56.7% of those voting chose the CCM there are still 43.3% of the electorate which did not. I therefore call on all our citizens and residents to forgive and forget past hurts, insults and disappointments, as we seek to unite and build this our beloved country.

We pledge to be a government for all Nevisians. We must now reach across the political divide and embrace our fellow Nevisians as we harness our collective energies and ideas to move Nevis forward. We have only one beloved Nevis to which each and every one of us must dedicate our efforts individually and collectively if we are to succeed. We must truly demonstrate that we are One Nevis.

My government intends to build a Nevis for all. Nevisians and Non-Nationals who call Nevis home must feel welcomed and appreciated in this our island. All of us, and I repeat ALL of us, must be given a fair chance to obtain a fair share of all that Nevis has to offer. I implore you to focus on the fact that fair isn't about everyone getting the same thing but that fair is everyone being afforded the same opportunity to be successful.

Our people must not be attacked or vilified for their political views and opinions. We live in a free and democratic society and must recognize that in any robust democracy we must defend our neighbor's right to shout at the top of his/her voice that which we abhor even as we defend our right to shout at the top of our voice that in which we believe. Freedom of speech which undergirds our democracy must be respected and promoted.

I must however emphasize that freedom of speech has never been free. With great freedom comes great responsibility. As part of the kinder gentler Nevis that we wish to see, we must be able to discuss ideas and even differ with each other without the level of rancor which we have witnessed in the recent past. Let us engage with each other and differ with each other if we must, but let us do so respectfully.

It is with a profound sense of conviction and passion that we showcase our record as a living testimony of accountability and accomplishments. My government will take steps over the next 5 years to build on these accomplishments as we seek to advance our economy. We must ensure that our youths and our people generally are empowered so that they can seize the commanding heights in their own country. Even as we seek to usher into being a kinder gentler Nevis where we once again become our brothers' keeper and our sisters' helper, we must ensure that we take care of our sick, our infirm and our fellow citizens living with disabilities. Our elderly must continue to enjoy pride of place in our island, for we stand on the rock that they have built.

A Future of Opportunities and Optimism

My government is committed to providing a future of opportunities and optimism through good governance. We must usher in a new culture in our performance and delivery of service to our people. We must be prepared to embrace change and craft a new direction as we continue to create an environment to nurture and develop the wellbeing of our people. This environment is a result of foresight and creativity and will focus on three broad areas namely: Good Governance, the Economy and Social Development. This approach is necessary for the advocacy and demonstration of the mantra of putting you, the people, first.

Good Governance

My government stands committed to improving the delivery of service to the people of Nevis. As a consequence, your CCM led Party in government is determined to schedule the sitting of Parliament at least once every two months. This commitment would result in a timely relay of information in the transaction of the people's business and provide a better framework for the interaction of Parliamentarians for the people's benefit, while allowing us to roll out our legislative agenda. Additionally, my government will schedule monthly Press Conferences to interact with the island's robust Media. My government holds firm to the view that the task of development this country is not only the responsibility of the government but that the members opposite and their supporters do have a role to play in the future development of the island.

As elected parliamentarians, our citizens have every right to demand greater performance from us. I therefore wish to use this opportunity to challenge the members opposite to elevate themselves and to rise to that task. I challenge them to be constructive in their criticism and I

also wish to remind them that they too can bring forward ideas to this honorable House which we together as government and opposition can harness for the betterment of all citizens and residents of this island. My Government is committed to playing its part to elevate the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition like those serving on the Opposition benches play a critical role in the good governance agenda. My Government pledges to work closely with them to advance our beloved island. We accordingly urge those holding that high office to rise to the challenge as well. To this end, my government has already made provision to provide a fully furnished office space for the Leader of the Opposition. In addition, we have committed to providing resources in our budget for the upkeep of that office along with monthly administrative support. This is a first in the Federation and my government must be commended for this.

There is little doubt that politicians, more so parliamentarians, must be held at a higher standard of accountability than the ordinary citizens. This rhetoric must become law. To this end my government in this new dispensation shall speedily operationalize Integrity in Public Life legislation and pass Freedom of Information legislation to ensure that those whom we have elected to serve us remember and remain true to their purpose and their oaths. We shall ensure that we move forward on these two fronts within the first 6 months of this term. Accountability and transparency must not just be buzzwords heard during political campaigns. They must be given real meaning as we move Nevis forward and advance our good governance agenda.

Mr. President, with increasing demands to attend to public business and with more diverse communities and increasing population, it must be a priority to institute electoral reform. Admittedly, there are some areas that are not within our constitutional purview, but where the Nevis Island Assembly has control, we must exercise that authority. One such area is jurisdiction over the increase in the number of constituencies in the Nevis Island Assembly Elections. In this new dispensation my government shall commence the process to increase the number of constituencies to seven for the Nevis Island Assembly Elections. This will allow your Government to better deal with the increasing demands of modern governance. We expect that this process will demand widespread consultation with the Opposition and with all stakeholders but we believe that greater and more effective representation can be achieved by an electoral map that more properly reflects the demands of modern governance.

With emerging global trends and the pressures to conform, governments are mandated to adapt or be left behind. It is to this end that your CCM Party in government, having succeeded in large measure to restore confidence in the Civil Service, shall move with deliberate haste to enact legislation to reform the Civil Service in Nevis to provide better quality service to our people. This we intend to do in consultation with the Federal Government. It is critical that public servants be held accountable for the level of service we offer to the Nevisian public. It is equally critical that public servants be compensated at a level to reflect the professional service demanded of them. Our essential services such as teachers, nurses and security forces should be given greater consideration because of the critical nature of their jobs. To this end, my Government hopes to move Nevis to a position where compensation reflects performance. Those benefitting from increments and bonus payments (including double salaries when paid) should be benefitting from such rewards for their performance, productivity and commitment. Only so will we be able to get all of our public servants to demonstrate the professionalism and

dedication to the people of Nevis of which we know them to be capable. Pay for performance is not a new concept and we look forward to working with experts to advance this discussion as we reform our public service. My government understands and appreciates that the support and partnership of the public service will be critical if the developmental agenda of the Government is to be effected. We intend therefore to fashion a genuine working relationship with the public service based on mutual respect, discipline and professionalism.

The Economy

As we turn our attention to the economy, I must emphasize that, our economy, like so many other small island developing states, is highly synchronized to the global economy, therefore, our success during this parliamentary term will no doubt be directly affected by volatilities in these major economies globally and particularly the United States of America which remains one of our biggest trading partners. Notwithstanding the open nature of our economy, we must however make sensible plans and develop our road map for our island's economic success whilst remaining cautiously optimistic about the growth and stability of the global economy.

Our goal is to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth across all sectors of the economy. The ECCB has put forward a growth target of 5 percent per annum for the region and that is what we shall whole heartedly strive to achieve during this parliamentary term. Even while we seek to achieve this benchmark, we must seek to develop an environment in which the social pillars of our country, namely affordable education, affordable housing, access to high quality and affordable healthcare for all and most importantly the safety and security of our people, are maintained.

We intend to work in close harmony with the private sector in such a way as to strengthen and enhance our resilience and competitiveness, as well as diversify and broaden the scale and scope of the private sector. We will seek to provide a solid platform from which both new and existing small, medium and large, indigenous and international businesses will be able to thrive here in Nevis. My Government is mindful of the immense challenges that Small Island states faces but we are equipped and ready to provide effective and operative solutions to these social, financial and economic issues.

We must be innovative and embrace advances in technological development as a means of diversification. My government supports the view that the broad-based deployment of information technology can have a substantial impact on our nation's economic productivity and growth as well as the educational and social success of our citizens. To this end we continue to make substantive investment in our information technology infrastructure to support the daily services offered by the various governmental agencies so as to enhance the way we respond to the needs of the general public. My Government shall work towards the digitizing of all government departments, records and services as well as the provision of free Wi-Fi in various zones around the island including our city centre of Charlestown.

My Government pledges to exercise prudence with regard to the management of the Public Debt. The ECCB has set a debt to GDP target of 60 percent by 2030. As of December 31st, 2016, St. Kitts and Nevis had attained a debt to GDP level of 63.2 percent. Even though the ECCB and other agencies are yet to devise a formulae for the calculation of the Nevis specific

GDP, we are certain that the combined Debt to GDP ratio for St. Kitts-Nevis is a fair reflection of the situation in Nevis as well. This is an indication that we are well on our way. The expected expansions in various productive sectors of our economy will no doubt put us in a favorable position and be able to meet our debt servicing obligations to our creditors. This expected expansion will also bring many benefits such as a stronger labor market which means employment for our people and a stronger tax base which will allow my Government to be able to provide more and better services to all our people.

We must seek to expand our economy by attracting foreign direct investment through initiatives such as the Citizenship by Investment Programs and lifestyle homebuyers program. During this parliamentary term, my government will seek to do a review of our investment promotion policies and seek to reenergize and reactivate the Nevis Investment Promotion Agency so that it can hold true to its mandate of being the driving force for attracting foreign direct investment to our shores.

Even as we seek to attract foreign capital for development, my government intends to forge ahead with renewed commitment and continue to place our people at the center of our development. We say People Matter Most because we know that for development to be meaningful it has to positively impact the lives of our people. During this term in office, the primary focus will continue to be our people and in this regard economic empowerment of our people shall be the foremost emphasis. Specific sectors will be targeted for development based on interest, commitment and the wherewithal of our people.

My government has seen the potential of the existing entrepreneurial development funding and recognizes the limitations. Consequently, we will provide a revolving entrepreneurial fund of \$5 million annually to provide seed funding for new businesses at an interest rate of 2% for youths under 35 years old, and our women as they seek to become entrepreneurs. Additionally, your government shall grant a rebate equivalent to a discount of 50% of the business license fee to women and to youths under the age of 35 years for the first 3 years of the establishment of their new businesses. This will help to empower youths and women to become business owners and unleash greater entrepreneurial spirit in our people.

My government recognizes that one of the essential ingredients for small businesses to thrive is continuing support. Therefore, your CCM Party in government shall facilitate the hosting of an exhibition every two years to showcase and market indigenous manufacturing enterprises. We laud the efforts of the Small Enterprise Development Unit and its supporting departments. My government is of the view that much more can be accomplished through greater collaborative effort among the Small Enterprise Development Unit and the Nevis Investment Promotion Agency. To this end my government will seek to merge the activities of these entities thereby strengthening sectorial linkages and better utilizing available resources. We anticipate that this coupling of the Small Enterprise Development Unit and the Nevis Investment Promotion Agency will create a one stop shop for both local and foreign investment.

As part of the process for empowerment, our people must be encouraged to be innovative and to seek to develop business ideas in the non-traditional sectors of the economy. To support this process, my governments intend to improve and enhance the services presently offered by the

Small Enterprise Development Unit in our quest to develop a Small Business Development Centre for the island of Nevis. This Centre will have as its motto: “InvestNevis, building our economy one business at a time” and will serve as an incubator for business development with the main thrust of moving business ideas from concept to implementation.

My government is fully aware that continuous growth in our economy will ultimately result in an improvement in the standard of living of our people and it will place a greater burden on government to allocate resources to support our needs. We implore you the citizens of this country to seize the opportunities for entrepreneurial development that will arise rather than leave the burden of providing these services solely to government.

While we are heartened by the fact that every Nevisian is inspiring to become self-sufficient in their transportation needs by owning their own vehicle as is seen by the rapid increase in vehicle importation over the past two years, this will no doubt put a strain on government to not only in terms of our ability to properly maintain our existing road network or to continue to seek to create new bypass access to ease traffic flow but most importantly the need for government to seek to provide adequate parking. While some may see the issue of parking as a developing problem, my government sees it as an additional opportunity for entrepreneurial development for you the members of the public.

Over the coming year my government will seek to incentivize residents who own open lots of land in the Charlestown area and its environs to capitalize on this opportunity for providing parking space and use these lots to create private parking lots at a reasonable rate to members of the public. It will require a change in culture for our motoring public/drivers and I further impress on our young men who presently own golf carts merely for fun and frolic to seize the opportunity that will now arise and to develop shuttle service to and from downtown Charlestown to these external parking lots. Our people must always be prepared to try new ventures as my government embark on programs to promote new and creative entrepreneurial opportunities.

We must seek to rebuild and renovate our physical infrastructure as a means of reducing overall government expenditure. As part of this process, construction work has already commenced on the reconstruction of the Treasury Building Complex to replace the building which was destroyed by fire early in our first term of office. My government has envisioned the renovation of the old warehouse building as an extension to the Treasury Building Complex as it seeks to create a Financial Complex to house all related financial departments of the government but also much needed shops, retail space and restaurants. Additionally, my government shall seek to construct a Government Administrative Complex. The site has been identified and preliminary designs are nearing completion. These cost-saving especially in the area of monthly rental charges will provide us with resources which can be deployed to other sectors for development within the economy.

In this regard, my Government has grown concerned at the lack of activity in Charlestown after the close of normal business hours. Most of the population no longer lives within Charlestown proper and this has led to an absence of the vibrant night life for which most capitals are famous. As my Government works to have Charlestown inscribed as a UNESCO world heritage site for 2020, we will also embark on a revitalization project for our capital city to create the necessary

environment for a return of shops, cafes, retail spaces and night time activity. Part of that initiative will be to create pedestrian only areas of Charlestown and to restrict the flow of heavy traffic particularly large trucks and containers through the city centre.

Tourism

In the area of Tourism Product Development, Nevis must continue the bold thrust to have historic Charlestown inscribed as a World Heritage City by UNESCO. We are making steady progress in this regard and I wish to thank His Excellency Ambassador Dr. Everson Hull, Mrs. Evelyn Henville and their team who have led this charge with passion and aplomb. This coveted inscription will catapult Nevis to the next level as a tourist destination unleashing the full potential of our people and their creative spirit and allowing us to showcase our rich history to the world.

With the growth of the tourism sector and the thrust to hire Nevisians with “five-star experience”, increasing pressure is placed on us to have a cadre of professionally trained and skilled practitioners in the field of hospitality. We must prepare and train our people now to seize the opportunities as they arise. Therefore, my government will partner with an already identified private investor to create a Hospitality Institute in Nevis offering a full range of training in Culinary Arts, Mixology and Bartending, Cosmetology, Massage Therapy, Hospitality Management and related hospitality areas. This Hospitality Institute shall cater to our own students and foreign students alike.

During this dispensation, your CCM Party in government anticipates that we will see the fruition of its efforts with the commencement of touristic developments at Pinneys, Cades Bay and Potworks. Additionally, my government expects to launch the redevelopment of the Rest Haven property. This undertaking would facilitate the expansion of Charlestown and add diversity to the tourism sector by creating a boardwalk, retail shops, restaurants, office space and a marina facility. An investor has been identified and Nevis can look forward to the realization of this major development initiative in the not too distant future.

The Environment

My government recognizes that the flora, fauna, beaches, coastlines, reefs, valleys and mountains of Nevis are critical to the wellbeing of our people and our image regionally and internationally. A pristine environment is also a necessary element of a healthier Nevis. Our island is marketed under the tagline “Nevis Naturally”. The natural aspects to our island are and must continue to be of utmost importance to us all.

In addition to the push in renewable energy, my government shall ensure that planning laws and regulations are adhered to and that buildings conform to the requirements of the island’s building code. Where necessary, amendments to legislation will occur to ensure that Nevis stays abreast of best planning practices regionally and internationally.

Through partnership with an investor entered into late last year, my government intends to shortly embark on an islandwide effort to clear our lands of derelict and abandoned vehicles and white goods. These will be processed and exported as scrap metal. We shall also attend to

other waste similarly like cardboard and some household waste. Green waste can be processed to provide mulch and we are committed to instituting a recycling programme islandwide.

As part of this overall thrust, my government intends over the course of this term to ban the importation and use of plastics and styrofoam. This is a regional and global trend that is emerging and we have seen similar approaches in nearby Antigua and Barbuda. This effort will be done in consultation with stakeholders but is intended to ease the considerable environmental damage that plastic and styrofoam causes to our island particularly our oceans.

My government intends to robustly enforce anti littering and anti dumping laws and to continually seek through the Nevis Solid Waste Management Authority to educate our public on the need to keep our environment clean and to dispose of waste only as prescribed by law.

We intend to clean up Nevis and we ask for the public's partnership as we ensure that Nevis remains pristine and lives up to its tagline "Nevis Naturally".

Agriculture

Agriculture and food security must be the heart pulse of emerging economies and can be the common thread that links the varied challenges we face and helps build a sustainable future. It is therefore to agriculture and its many diverse sub-sectors that we continue to look as we move towards the diversification of our economy. By focusing our minds on technology, high productivity and efficiency, our thrust is to be able to produce certain specified commodities and to add value so that we can reduce our reliance on food importation.

My government shall continue to offer incentives to elevate agriculture within the hierarchy of our local economy. We will endeavor to provide the requisite incentives to facilitate and modernize agricultural production. Specifically, my government shall facilitate and increase the number of Green/Shade Houses under production; facilitate the establishment of a Broiler Production Unit; upgrade the breeds of cattle, goats and sheep for meat production; mandate that the Agro Processing Unit increase the range of value added commodities commercially and facilitate the cultivation of backyard gardens to complement the Affordable Housing Programme; examine the rates for water and electricity charged to registered and bona fide farmers. Continued budgetary support will be given to the Agricultural Open Day and Exhibition as a vehicle to showcase our thrust in Agriculture.

Our youths must be incentivized to see agriculture as a sustainable and viable means of employment and as a potential economic driver. Working through the Small Business Development Centre and the Ministry of Agriculture, my government will seek to launch the Youth Agri-preneurship Incubator Program as a means of getting our young people to learn more about the business of agriculture and its role in fostering economic development. This program will focus on alternative forms of agriculture including developing alternative energy, agro-industries, green house technology and aquaponics.

Even as we introduce and support advanced farming techniques, we will continue our efforts to reduce crop damage and losses to farmers caused by the increasing population of monkeys. Working in partnership with the company Arnova and Mission Taiwan, the program to reduce

human/monkey conflict is gaining much success as is evident by the reduction in crop losses to farmers over the past 6 months. This program is specifically geared to bring about a change in behavior of these animals and involves creating feed banks on the mountainside away from farm lands with the intention of getting the population of monkeys to focus on feeding in selected areas rather than the wide roaming which exists at present. In addition, a reforestation of our mountain sides with fruit trees has already started and will be continued. Further the ongoing efforts to sterilize monkeys to degrade the population over time is also gaining momentum and will be continued. Lastly the successful programme to provide electrified fencing already seen in Cades Bay and New River will continue. This humane approach to the human/monkey conflict has already attracted positive international attention and is seeing tangible results. My government thanks Arnova and specifically Vernon Gibbs Hall who have given us this excellent platform on which to build in bringing relief to our farmers, increasing food production whilst preserving the monkeys in the wild.

My government will continue to work in close collaboration with our allied partners. Our technical staff will continue to take advantage of training opportunities that become available through our partnership with these entities. We also intend to continue our close relationship with the Earth University in Costa Rica as we continue to expose our students to the training program in general Agriculture.

My government values the support and assistance it has been receiving from these allied partners and pledges to continue the collaboration in the interest of the industry. We wish to place on record our deep appreciation for the support from institutions such as the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), the Inter American Institute for Co-operation on Agriculture (IICA), the Taiwanese Technical Mission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Organization of American States (OAS).

Energy Development

As reported by the International Energy Agency (IEA), renewable energy sources have been the driver of much of the growth in the global clean energy sector since the year 2000. The role of renewable sources in the global power mix, in particular, continues to increase rapidly. On a percentage basis, renewables continue to be the fastest-growing power source.

The IEA stated that, “as global renewable electricity generation expands in absolute terms, it is expected to surpass that from natural gas and double that from nuclear power, becoming the second most important global electricity source, after coal. Globally, renewable generation is estimated to rise to 25 percent of gross power generation in 2018”.

Against this backdrop, my government stands firm in its commitment towards the pursuit of renewable energy development especially in the area of Geothermal Energy. Since 2004 your CCM Party then in government had explored the possibility of harnessing geothermal energy as a source of cheaper cleaner energy for the people of Nevis and for possible export to St. Kitts. This project now has renewed impetus with drilling once again taking place at Hamilton as we take closer steps towards eventual production of this type of energy. Alternative energy has the potential to truly diversify and transform the island’s economy.

Nevis is on the cusp of something truly revolutionary with geothermal energy. If the promise of geothermal is realized then we shall see the development of ancillary industries using the cheaper power and bi-products of geothermal energy. We shall see the potential for export to St Kitts and neighboring islands. Our people will see the savings from cheaper energy. Our environment will benefit from cleaner energy generation and our island will wean itself off fossil fuels for the generation of electricity. My government hopes to achieve the public relations bonanza of Nevis being declared the greenest place on Planet Earth. Geothermal energy will allow Nevis much needed diversification of our economy. My government welcomes and commits to this endeavor.

Social Development Agenda

My government has worked assiduously to strengthen its anti-poverty response and social safety net system geared towards improving the standard of living of the most vulnerable persons in our community. Efforts geared towards promoting Gender Equality must now feature prominently on our agenda encompassing three main thematic areas: namely Reducing Violence against Women and Girls, Women's Economic Empowerment and Increasing Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Public Life

It behoves us therefore to continue to work diligently with our social partners in advancing our human development as clearly laid out by the United Nations Human Development Agenda. To this end we will continue our work on achieving Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs 1, 3 & 5, namely Eradicating Poverty, stimulating Good Health and Well-Being of our people; and promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, respectively. We are already making tremendous progress in these areas and this will continue to be our primary focus in this new dispensation. Similarly, work will immediately commence on achieving SDGs 4, 13 & 16, namely providing Inclusive and Quality Education, building awareness on Climate Action to mitigate the effect of Climate Change, and Providing Access to Justice through the Building of Effective and Accountable Institutions, respectively. A Steering Committee on the SDGs has also been established drawing on personnel from key Ministries to help guide and mainstream SDG themes into government policies. Further details and results of the SDGs programs, those already implemented and those proposed, will be clearly laid out as part of our social agenda in the 2018 and subsequent Budget presentations.

Security

Foremost for the wellbeing of our people is the issue of safety and security. To support the work of the security services, my government shall expand the CCTV program beyond the environs of Charlestown to ensure island wide coverage. Additionally, it is matter of deep concern that our conviction rate for heinous crimes is very low as many of the perpetrators of these crimes are able to escape conviction. It is the view of many that the underlying reason is that these crimes are not prosecuted by officials with the correct mix of legal and technical skills. Against this backdrop, my government shall seek to appoint a lawyer to work specifically with the Police Force in Nevis and the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions who will deal specifically with the prosecution of criminals.

Health Care

In the area of health care, it cannot be said more emphatically that the health of a nation is an essential precondition and contributor to economic development. As my government forges ahead in transforming the economy of our island, so too must we transform the health sector.

My government recognizes that our healthcare sector requires serious work if we are to provide the quality service expected by our people. We must expand the array of specialized services offered at the Alexandra Hospital and district health centres. We must move quickly to digitize our health records and expedite the process to offer universal health insurance to all our citizens and residents by 2018.

My government has already taken important steps in this direction with the planned \$18 million expansion of the Alexandra Hospital scheduled to be completed in 24 months. This project when completed, would enhance the ability of my government to deliver Quality Health Care to all citizens and residents in Nevis and build upon the existing framework and infrastructure in this important sector.

To complement the existing services presently offered at our main hospital, my government intends to install a CT Scan machine to provide our health care professionals with a critical tool to properly diagnose patients. These substantial investments in providing a modern health care system for our people requires my government to allocate tremendous resources to this sector.

Therefore, during this term my government will seek to do a review of all fees and charges throughout this sector to bring them in line with the increasing cost of providing this improved level of health care for our people. At every step in this review process we will seek to ensure that the less fortunate among us are not put in a position where they are disadvantaged in anyway or deprived of the opportunity to gain access to these specialized services.

My government is cognizant of the view that our people face great challenges from time to time in all aspects of their daily lives. This challenges can inevitable lead to depression and later develop into mental health issues. We are therefore committed to providing the necessary support structure and counselling services to assist our people to confront these challenges at an early stage. My government will therefore seek to establish a full fledged counseling unit within the Ministry of Health headed by a qualified and experienced Psychiatrist and supported by a full complement of counselors to respond to the needs of our people.

This hospital expansion project coupled with the anticipated roll out of the National Health Insurance Scheme in 2018 are major priorities for my government in the area of healthcare in the near term. Exciting times lie ahead and I charge all our health care professionals to bring their vast talent and energy to bear so that the Nevisian people can be the beneficiaries.

Education

In the area of Education and Training, my government has been able to secure scholarships for Nevisian students to study abroad in Cuba, Taiwan, Morocco, Mexico, Switzerland, Turkey,

Georgia, the United Kingdom and Australia. In addition, my government has invested heavily in providing full and partial scholarships to Nevisian youths for university training.

Recognizing the critical importance of education to national development, my government intends to create a scholarship and training office to provide a one stop shop for students wishing to study abroad or access training. Every person in Nevis must be exposed to continuing academic and vocational training. My government urges our people to seize these opportunities as and when they arise.

We must continue to develop our education system with an emphasis on vocational training for the empowerment of our people. An educated population is a prerequisite for lasting socio-economic development.

Your CCM led party in government will source vocational training opportunities abroad and incentivize students through financial assistance to utilize the services of the UWI Open Campus. Education is critical in advancing the social agenda of our beloved island. A greater investment in science and math is also critical. To that end, your CCM led party in government will create a fully furnished modern science lab at the Charlestown Primary School initially, and thereafter expand to all schools island-wide. As part of the continued expansion of the educational opportunities on Nevis, the Ivor Walters Primary School will be renovated and expanded to better serve the needs of the growing population of St. Johns. Likewise, my new CCM led Administration will also move expeditiously to construct a permanent facility for the Nevis Sixth Form College and transform it to a Community College for the continued training of the island's youths.

Cultural Preservation

The development and preservation of our culture has always been at the forefront of the agenda of the CCM led Administration. When your CCM led Administration advanced the idea of investing in the Performing Arts, it was to engage our youths so that they can showcase their talents in a conducive and an accommodating environment. This was the genesis for the construction of a Performing Arts Centre.

The concept of Performing Arts now needs to be institutionalized so as to enable other facets of this critical area of human expression to be explored and adopted. One such area is music.

My government will seek to establish a Music Academy along with a state of the art recording studio. These entities will allow Nevisian youths to develop their musical talents and recording skills. Without contradiction, music has been the panacea for the young. It is through music that deviant anti-social behavior may be changed and our youths directed to positive pathways for their lives. Music and the Arts also provide us with viable economic prospects and a lucrative area for job creation.

Housing

Housing is a fundamental right of our people. Recognizing that to every man his home is his castle and it is one of the most important investments that any individual can make during his

lifetime, my government, through the Nevis Housing and Land Development Corporation housing program, intends to continue the housing revolution it started in 1994. Lands have already been identified and an additional \$20 million is being negotiated from the Social Security Board to build homes so that Nevisians can continue to confidently wave their titles to their own homes with a great sense of personal pride and accomplishment.

The immediate goal of the Corporation is to promote, build and distribute at least Sixty Six (66) affordable houses to applicants with all amenities. These houses will be a mixture of four (4), three (3) and two (2) bedrooms built on approximately 5000 to 8000 thousand square feet of land in areas such as Maddens, Cedar View and the proposed new development referred to as University Heights to be located at Spring Hill. The objective of this proposed new development, University Heights, is to incentivize Nevisians studying abroad upon returning to Nevis after graduation to purchase 8000 square feet of land at a concessionary price of EC\$1.00 per square foot for construction of their dream home. This innovative approach to home ownership will allow our young graduates a meaningful stake in their homeland.

Sports

In the area of Sporting Development, my government during its first dispensation promulgated the idea that our people, especially our youths, needed to be more engaged in Sports as a means of combatting anti-social behavior. It was felt that too much pressure was being placed on the Elquemedo T Willet Park and that Cricket and Football should be hosted at separate facilities. We were convinced of the wisdom of this approach and we can herald the accomplishment in establishing the “Mondo Athletic Track” situated at Long Point built to IAAF specifications which will now host Football and Athletics.

The first phase has been completed and the track has been officially certified by the IAAF. It is a matter of tremendous pride for all Nevisians that Nevis can now host any international athletic meet outside of the World Games and the Olympics. Work will commence shortly on the seating, parking and attendant facilities which are necessary to elevate this athletic stadium to the position of the best facility in the region.

As the ETW Park now becomes dedicated solely as the home of cricket for Nevis, my government will in this term invest \$15 million in upgrading that facility to first class and international cricket standards. Nevis must be able to bring regional and international games back to the island. In addition, my government will also partner with the St Kitts Nevis Patriots to create a cricket academy for Nevis to ensure that Nevisian cricketers, both male and female, get maximum exposure to the technical aspects and training of the game.

Relationship with St. Kitts

Mr. President, we must continue on our path of Unity with St Kitts. Our country for the first time in its history has a real chance to function as a true Nation where the talents of all are recognized and pressed into service to build a better St Kitts and Nevis. The little boy from Cox and the little girl from Matchmans Road must be treated no differently and must be given the same opportunity as the little boy from Cayon or the little girl from Molineux. They must not have their ambitions and aspirations stifled by virtue of the accidental place of their

birth. We must continue to see this as OUR country comprising of two islands but nevertheless belonging to all of us. None of our citizenry must be denied the full fruits of their citizenship. In this regard my government commends our Prime Minister and commits to continuing the important work which we have started to build a better and more cohesive Nation for all.

Even as we continue in this partnership with St Kitts, to build a better and more cohesive Nation for all, our people ought to expect us to do more to solidify access to our fair share. This can only be achieved through legislative changes. In pursuit of this, my government intends to impress on the Federal Government to enact legislative changes to ensure that the citizens of Nevis get their fair share of the benefits of the nation's resources. No more should the people of Nevis have to rely on good working relations or unity arrangement between political parties in St. Kitts and Nevis in order to access to what is rightfully theirs, or suffer when the relationship is adverse. These arrangements for sharing of resources must be enshrined into law and flow to the people of Nevis irrespective of the political arrangements between the Federal Government and the Nevis Island Administration.

Therefore, my government has already started discussions with the Federal Government to enact amendments to the Value Added Tax Legislation passed in 2010 to remove the existing single filing arrangement and mandate all companies operating in Nevis to file and pay their monthly VAT returns to the Inland Revenue Department in Nevis. Likewise, recommendation will also be made for similar amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Legislation to mandate all companies operating in Nevis to file and pay their quarterly Corporate Income Tax to the Inland Revenue Department in Nevis. It is only fair that as we labor to build and expand our economy, our people must be the full beneficiaries of the expanded economic activity. This approach will also ensure that the relative position, strength and growth of our two islands are monitored and allow for an easier and more equitable distribution of national resources.

My government looks forward to the full cooperation of the Federal government in achieving this critical legislative agenda which would usher in a new public revenue paradigm for Nevis.

Conclusion

My government commits to you that the Nevis we will build will be a Nevis for all. It will be a Nevis which will become a shining beacon on the hill for economic prosperity, good governance and transparency. It will become the best place in all of the Caribbean to live and work. I ask that as we build this Nevis that we hold hands together and continue to invoke God's blessings, protection and guidance upon us all. I ask you to pray for my government and for the Cabinet. I ask you to pray that God may grant my government wisdom. It is through wisdom that we will manage and through wisdom we will make the right decisions to move Nevis forward.

We therefore look forward to a lasting and close relationship with the Church. There is no lasting development without Christ and our Churches must be asked to keep us in constant prayer and to place our Island and her leadership before God without ceasing. We promise a new Nevis where our families, our communities, our churches and our Government can all sing the same hymn from the same pew and work collectively to build a better and more holistic Nevis for all.

My government asks for your prayers, your wise counsel, your help and for your continued love and support. But most of all my government asks that you allow your patriotism and your undying love for Nevis to inform your every word and deed. For many of us, Nevis is all we have. Let us therefore protect our island, its flora, its fauna, its environment. Let us pledge together to ensure that the Nevis we bequeath to our children will be a better Nevis than that which was bequeathed to us.

As we move through this term, my Government prays that God will bless us all. May He continue to guide and guard us all and prosper our efforts to provide good governance and greater opportunities for all the people of Nevis.

Thank you.