

Message by HE The Governor Elizabeth Carriere, OBE following her swearing-in on Wednesday, 5 August 2015

Honourable Premier

Honourable Madam Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Honourable Ministers of Government

Honourable Deputy Governor

Honourable Attorney General

Honourable Acting Financial Secretary

Honourable Member of the Opposition

Members of the Legislative Assembly

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you so much for your warm and generous welcome.

I am very pleased to be here. It is a great honour to take up this responsibility, having sworn the Oath of Allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen, and having been sworn in as the 14th Governor of Montserrat.

In doing so I believe I have come to a hopeful place. I am an optimistic person and, judging by your achievements in the face of so much challenge, I believe Montserratians must also be optimistic people. On the positive side so much has been achieved in Montserrat since the start of the volcanic eruption 20 years ago. The UK has worked alongside the Government of Montserrat to ensure children have access to better schools, funding is in place for key medical staff, and plans to improve internet connectivity and introduce a new purpose-built ferry are in place.

Also on the positive side, there is so much more work to be done...by all of us.

Why is this positive? Because together, Montserratians, with their government, their community institutions and with the UK Government – and with me, your Governor – can achieve – with cooperation and careful planning – what is needed for this island to build a new success. And I want to emphasise the word new because Montserrat, while building on and honouring its past, will be a success if it rebuilds with a clear vision of the future.

Of course, I have much to learn and, now I am here, I will focus on getting to know the island and its people – and most importantly the people's views, hopes and aspirations – and also what they worry about. I will begin my learning visits immediately, and hope to have visited every possible corner of the island within my first couple of months. Of course, if there is a corner I miss, I am sure Montserratians will tell me where that is, and I will do my best to get there. But bear with me. Despite this being a small community, there is much to see, do and learn. It will take me time.

Many Montserratians I have met so far tell me that they feel they are very much a part of the wider British family. And the 2012 UK Government White Paper emphasises this, stating that the Overseas Territories are 'an integral part of Britain's life and history'. The White Paper also calls for a partnership – working together – to address challenges. I want to foster this notion of partnership, of shared responsibility and mutual commitment, and help to promote a mature relationship between the Government of Montserrat and the Government of the United Kingdom. Effectively addressing the serious issues of safety, security and good governance is central to this relationship.

But Montserratians are also part of the wider world – they travel, some live elsewhere, and they are connected by family ties, friendships and businesses. Events that happen in the region and globally affect them. They want to be connected, to welcome visitors, to move freely to and from the Island. I am happy to say that plans for fibre-optic connectivity are moving forward. If we all – both the Government of Montserrat and the UK Government, work in partnership to put in place all the necessary preparations, then I am confident that in the not too distant future, all on the island should be able to connect more quickly and reliably with family and friends, and conduct business, much more effectively through a new fibre-optic cable.

And here at home, there is work now underway to improve schooling and housing, and great hopes of building a new hospital. I will give priority to supporting these programmes as well, as investing in its people is fundamental to the future of Montserrat. I am sure you will agree that children and other vulnerable people need care and attention and protection – so they can feel safe and empowered to develop their potential and to contribute to the present and future of the Island. This is something I will be paying a great deal of attention to.

All of this requires and underpins a vibrant economy. They are mutually important and beneficial. Poised as it is to grow economically again – there are barriers and setbacks to Montserrat's growth that need to be addressed realistically. I look forward to hearing from Montserratians their vision and priorities for getting the economy going again. Some of this will depend on local expertise and entrepreneurial spirit and know-how, and some will need foreign investment. But we all know one thing for certain – none of this will succeed if the conditions for business are not sound. This is about good governance – a well functioning and efficient civil service, sound legal practices, probity, transparency and accountability, good and well-functioning systems for financial and material investments and a safe and secure environment in which to flourish.

Do these all exist in Montserrat presently? You might answer that some do and some don't. Without safety, security and good governance, investors (the right kind) will not come, infrastructure will be poorly built and maintained, businesses will fail, and Montserrat will not be able to promote itself as a sound place to do business. Without such a reputation – investment, energy, enthusiasm, ideas and talent will not yield productive and sustainable results. I am committed to working with you to continue to improve the environment for business, and to help make Montserrat vibrant and self-sustaining again.

Montserrat is rightly proud of its reputation as a low crime jurisdiction, but it cannot rest on its laurels. As economic development increases, so do the risks of violent crime, susceptibility to natural and man-made disasters and threats to safe communities. With my constitutional responsibility for security and defence, I will ensure that these considerations are at the forefront of all economic development decisions. And, as you know, this may sometimes require decisive action by the Government of Montserrat to make sure we continue on the right path. I am a firm believer that

there is no substitute for good governance; when things get off track, I will be prepared to take action in my role as Governor.

It is impossible not to notice the incredible, pristine beauty of this island. Montserratians and visitors emphasise this is what they particularly love about Montserrat. This beauty is not only pleasing and a source of joy, but it is also a key asset that belongs to all Montserratians. Keeping the environment beautiful, healthy, clean and sustainable requires work, and it is everyone's business. There are already threats – such as effluent from cruise ships and the risk of oil spills – that we must guard against. I am so looking forward to my first hikes, and learning from Montserratians and the agencies that you work with – such as the National Trust, Coral Cay and the Waitt Institute – what needs to be done to protect and to promote the natural environment, and how we can do this together to keep Montserrat beautiful! I will ensure that the environmental impacts of economic development are fully evaluated to ensure that Montserrat's renowned beauty, both above and below the waterline, is preserved, protected and enhanced.

In summing up, let me say I believe very strongly that Montserrat's future lies in the hands of its most valuable resource: its people. I will work with the Government of Montserrat to support its plans to realise a safe, sustainable and prosperous Montserrat built on good governance, and investment in the tools that will unlock the island's potential. Better sea links, tapping opportunities for geothermal energy and improving technological links to the wider world all have a part to play.

And lastly, let me offer my heartfelt thanks to the Honourable Deputy Governor, Alric Taylor, for carrying out his Acting Governor duties in such an untiring and effective manner.

Please accept my pledge, as your new Governor, to work with you with enthusiasm and commitment for the betterment of this Emerald Isle and its amazing, resilient people!

God Bless Montserrat!