



THRONE SPEECH 2012

Delivered by

His Excellency Governor Damian Todd

At the

Ceremonial State Opening

of the 1st Session of the 10th House of Assembly of the Turks and Caicos Islands

28 November 2012

MY government is certain that all who have been sent forward in the service of our people, share the single common goal of building a bright and prosperous future for all of our people, in this generation and generations yet to come.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

I would now like to outline the main policy objectives of my Government as it commences its term of office. As we move forward together into the future, my government pledges to adhere to two guiding principles:

First - to uphold and preserve our Christian faith and principles through the enactment of policies that are consistent with our Christian values; and secondly - to be unshakable in our commitment to integrity and the institutionalization and maintenance of good governance in all our affairs.

As we begin this new chapter in the history of our Turks and Caicos Islands, our primary agenda includes the development of the economy, educating and empowering our people, creating opportunities for our workforce, moving towards self-reliance in key areas, the restoration of national pride, achieving desired standards in healthcare and securing our borders. Successful strides in all of these areas will enable us to begin dialogue as we determine the pathway towards nationhood.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

Revitalization and growth of the economy and job creation will become the principal thrust of my government.

My Government is committed to placing special emphasis on tourism, construction and financial services as the principal channels through which meaningful economic growth can be achieved.

My Government will within the first 180 days in office, convene a Tourism and Investment Conference supported by marketing and promotional strategies.

My Government will open dialogue with practitioners in the financial services industry as well as international professional services providers to modernize our legislation and to develop and market new financial services products.

My Government, since taking office, has commenced examination of the Value Added Tax initiative and has embarked upon review of alternative revenue generating strategies with the intention of presenting these alternatives to all stakeholders for public consultation.

My Government will give focused attention to stalled resort projects in the Islands. We will seek to convene meetings with the developers of these projects with a view to reviving those which could be revived.

My Government will review the plans for the expansion of the Providenciales International Airport Terminal to ensure that the long term growth of our tourism sector is adequately provided for in any future expansion. We intend to complete the airport and runway project on the Island of South Caicos to ready that Island for future growth in the tourism market, as well as expansion of the local economy there.

My Government will give focused attention to diversification of our economy through expansion of the fishing and agriculture industries and other secondary industries.

My Government will enable the empowerment of Turks and Caicos Islanders through education, skills training, enabling entrepreneurship and expanding small business ownership in order to create a broad middle class with upward economic and social mobility.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

My Government holds as one of its primary mandates, the intention to address deficiencies at all levels of health care by simultaneously embarking upon a number of measures.

My Government will fully implement the Primary Health Care Renewal Strategy by providing access to well integrated and comprehensive primary care clinics, programs and services throughout the communities in the islands

My Government will establish the Health Regulatory Authority and further develop the Medical Councils of Licensure to ensure that standards of care are adhered to in all sectors of health.

My Government will ensure that with regards to the National Health Insurance Plan, children under the age of 18, the unemployed and the elderly will be granted coverage and that a pharmaceutical procurement programme is developed to provide medications at a cost effective price, to NHIP's community based pharmacies.

My Government will as a matter of high priority, fully establish and activate the Hospitals Contract Management Team, the Clinical Services Review Board and appoint a Turks and Caicos Islands Government Representative as provided for in the Hospitals Contract. We will then immediately conduct a financial and clinical audit of the hospitals and assign financial and service review penalties where necessary for failure to meet the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provided for in the contract.

My Government will seek to refinance the hospitals contract to lower the cost of provision of services and seek to increase third party revenue to Government and the hospitals as provided for in the hospitals contract.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

For the foreseeable future, tourism and its subsidiary industries will remain the principal revenue earner in our economy. My Government will remain committed to the tourism industry of these Islands.

My Government will review and revise our Tourism Strategic Plan and align it with our National Development Plan while seeking to diversify our tourism product through the promotion and strengthening of medical tourism, eco-tourism, sport tourism and culture and heritage tourism.

My Government will make its utmost priority the exploration of new tourism markets in Europe, Asia and South America to reduce the seasonality of tourist arrivals.

My Government will encourage and foster initiatives and ventures focused on the development of local community based small businesses as a part of our culture and heritage tourism experience, while including the attractions in the Caicos Islands.

My Government is committed to engaging in dialogue with international airlines so as to facilitate reliable and consistent passenger airlifts between the United States of America and the JAGS McCartney Airport in Grand Turk.

My Government will seek to expand cruise passenger arrivals into the country by developing a sea port on the Island of South Caicos thus enabling the re-vitalization of the economy of that Island and the lower Caicos Islands of North and Middle Caicos.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

My Government is committed to ensuring that the Public Service is effective and efficient in the delivery of services to the public.

My Government will introduce mandatory training programs in Government and Management Studies so that civil servants are productive in the execution of their duties and will improve the efficiency of service delivery through the development of an E-Government web portal.

My Government will reinstate the 10 percent salary deduction imposed on civil servants and conduct a review of salaries and allowances.

My Government will be committed to ensuring recognition is given to those Public Servants with records of exemplary service through the establishment of a Public Service Incentive Awards Program

My government will work with the Civil Service Association in the establishment of a Public Service Credit Union.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

Progress of this nation in terms of expanding our economy, creating employment opportunities and empowering Turks and Caicos Islanders will impact various aspects of our environment. It is our goal to preserve the quality of our natural surroundings.

My Government will, through the Department of Planning, develop an Infrastructure Master Plan which will clearly define, establish, enforce and maintain a style and identity unique to our Islands.

My Government will continue the improvement of the standard of living through the enhancement of assets required by the public in everyday life such as water supply and management, solid waste management, transportation, communication and energy.

My Government recognizes that the linking of the Caicos Islands is vital to the development of our country and will seek to develop this project through a public – private partnership venture.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

The education and empowerment of our people is critical and essential to the progressive and sustainable development of our Islands.

My Government has at the forefront of its agenda, programs geared towards the improvement of the infrastructure of our institutions of learning, increasing resources available to teachers and expanding the cadre of teachers through training and scholarship programs.

My Government will along with our experts in the field of education, embark upon a comprehensive review of the National Curriculum at all levels of education in an Education Stakeholder Workshop, the intended goal being to expand programs to improve skills in literacy and numeracy, developing interventional programs for those with learning disabilities as well as those gifted with special talents and introduce secondary language programs throughout the education system.

My Government will ensure the development of a Bridge to College Program that is geared towards exit certification in the Visual and Performing Arts, Hospitality Studies and Technical Education Studies. This programme will ensure that there is a high uptake of students from high school into the Community College, thereby reducing unemployment while ensuring career development of our youth.

My Government will develop the Turks and Caicos Islands Community College by improving the infrastructure at the Grand Turk Campus and the development of a College Park concept on Providenciales. This institution will be better equipped to provide training in technical studies, hospitality, athletics and the visual and performing arts and will strengthen links with regional and international institutions of higher learning.

My Government will review the National Scholarship Program to ensure that scholarships are awarded on merit and are aligned with our National Development Goals.

My Government will financially support the National Youth Policy and Programs and the development of sport programs within the education system. It is also our goal to have these Islands accepted by the International Olympic Committee in time for participation in the 2016 Games.

My Government is intent upon re-introducing the Cadet Program with an extended Community Service Program.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

The culture and the heritage of a people define them as a nation and set them apart from any other group of individuals. Here in the Turks and Caicos Islands, with less than 40% of our population consisting of our indigenous people, the cultural melting pot that we have become, though beneficial to economic and social development, challenges the traditional ways of life as we know it in our country.

My Government will, through collaboration with our Department of Culture, Ministry of Tourism and other stakeholders, develop a Culture and National Pride Program that will allow for the preservation of our heritage and the promotion of our culture.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

My Government has as its objective, the creation of an immigration policy that ensures that the total population of Turks and Caicos at any given time is the most peaceful, productive and cohesive mixture, capable of creating and contributing to the social and economic life of these Islands, with the result of moving us up on the Human Development Index whilst cultivating a great and just society.

My Government will draft for public consultation, an Immigration Policy based on the report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Immigration Reform. This policy will be geared towards protecting the homeland, will be investor and business friendly, will provide human resources for investment and will allow the critical population growth required to drive the future economy of Turks and Caicos Islands.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

My Government will seek equitable distribution of Crown Lands for residential use and long term leases for major development projects. We will fund a Development Plan for the entire Turks and Caicos Islands, inclusive of individual Island Plans, which will guide the future development of the Islands for the next ten (10) years.

Mr Speaker and Honourable Members:

My Government holds as one of its greatest charges, the responsibility of readying our Islands and our people for the move toward independence. We will convene a Commission for Independence whose mandate will be to define the process required to achieve this goal by creation of specific Developmental Targets. The achievement of these objectives will enable this eventual transition when called for by our people through a free and fair referendum on the question.

Guided by God our Father and bonded together by the passion to build these our Turks and Caicos Islands, may we as a Government of the people and for the people succeed in all our ventures.

May God bless us all and may God bless our Turks and Caicos Islands.