

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

2009 BUDGET ADDRESS “Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities”



Introduction

1. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill shortly entitled, the Appropriation Act 2009, be read a second time, and in so doing, I seek the indulgence of this Honourable House to permit me to read the Budget Address.
2. Mr. Speaker we are facing a year filled with challenges, threats and opportunities. The Territory is encountering many challenges that spun from the global economic turmoil that threatened our way of life and our standard of living. Threats arise from our competitors and those who seek to close down various aspects of our economy, but because opportunities will emerge Mr. Speaker, out of necessity we will be required to formulate ingenious solutions to survive these difficult times.
3. Mr. Speaker, the global economic crisis has reached the shores of these Virgin Islands and like other countries in the region and globally, we are bracing for a year of negative growth. The reality of the economic crisis means that it cannot be business as usual. We will continue to be proactive in our approach by introducing initiatives that would bring relief to the people. This is our resolve and we intend to meet and mitigate those obstacles that may lie ahead.
4. Furthermore Mr. Speaker, I believe in the resourcefulness of our people, and together we will weather the storm and rise to the challenge. This can only occur if each of us takes stock of our personal finances, business activities, and other investment opportunities by being prudent in our operations and promoting excellence in whatever we do.
5. Governments over time have sought ways to ease the burden on its people in an effort to reduce the cost of living. A number of duty free concessions have been granted for basic food and other items. Government intends to embark on a programme where officers would be visiting businesses to ensure that consumers are receiving the benefits of these and future concessions.
6. There is ongoing dialog with the BVI Electricity Corporation with regard to the high cost of electrical charges and the justification for fuel surcharge at a time when fuel price has been reduced. This matter would be pursued, but in the meantime customers are encouraged to reduce consumption while maintaining some level of comfort.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

7. Mr. Speaker, the Payroll Tax Review Committee is working diligently in reviewing the Payroll Tax Act that caused many debate since its implementation. The Government as well as all stakeholders is eagerly awaiting this report and the recommendations that lay therein. In the next few weeks members of the committee will be soliciting the views of the public and it is only through your participation can we have a tax structure that is fair while at the same time providing the necessary resources to finance the numerous services offered by Government.

Financial Services

1. Mr. Speaker we are viewed by others as a pawn in a world of powerful giants, who at this very moment in history are struggling to promote their own survivability. Burdened by wars in foreign lands and economic crisis within their borders, they have begun to scan the horizons for hope and solutions. Unfortunately, jurisdictions such as ours are on these same horizons. The Independent newspaper reported that the UK's Prime Minister is taking the lead at the summit of world leaders in London on 2nd April, 2009 to close down tax havens. While the paper did not indicate which countries he was referring to, we must be vigilant and be prepared for any possible fall out from this meeting. Notwithstanding Mr. Speaker, we hold firm that once our governance practices are examined vigorously and objectively, they will realize that in fact we are upholding the highest standards of ethics, fairness and jurisprudence.

2. The Territory has signed tax information exchange agreements with the United Kingdom, United States and Australia which demonstrate our commitment to survival of the industry. I take this opportunity to thank the Board and staff of the Financial Services Commission and all other related Government agencies for keeping the industry regulated and clean. This is especially so for the men and women who worked on the IPOC Case who were successful in bringing to justice those who try to use our offshore jurisdiction for illegal purposes.

Tourism

1. Mr. Speaker our tourism sector has experienced a slowdown as witnessed by the recent layoffs and cutbacks. This Government is committed to doing what is necessary to sustain the industry and has introduced a number of measures to improve the number of bookings. To this end, the Government negotiated with LIAT to provide subsidized service to Puerto Rico. In addition, a late night ferry service for those traveling through St. Thomas. Thus far these services have not been fully utilized. However, as they become more publicized and known, more people will take advantage of them. At a recent Airlift Committee Meeting, American Eagle announced that as of May 1st, American Eagle will make six (6) return trips SJU/EIS inclusive of a late flight from San Juan and an early departure from Beef Island at a reduced rate of one hundred and sixty dollars (\$160).

2. Mr. Speaker the Cruise Ship Pier is in need of repair and renovation work will begin during the course of the year to ensure the safety of passengers and vessels berthing at the site. Simultaneously, the tender dock for cruise ships would be built at the same facility thereby reducing most of the congestion that occurs at Road Town Ferry Terminal when a ship is anchored in the harbour.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

In compliance with ISPS requirements, a state of the art Closed Circuit Television Identification and Security System will be installed at the dock.

3. Mr. Speaker notwithstanding the economic climate, investors in the tourism industry continue to invest. Work at the Scrub Island Development Mr. Speaker has continued thereby proving meaningful employment for our people. The Mosquito Island development costing approximately ten million dollars (\$10M) will soon commence thereby providing meaningful employment for our people and economic benefits to the Territory. Mr. Speaker this project should be commended as it is visionary and a first of this magnitude in these islands where reusable energy and other environmental initiatives have been a focal point of development.

4. Mr. Speaker, not to be left out, our people who have carved a niche in the industry continue to invest in guest houses. We will continue to issue licenses in this regard to enable them to benefit like their expatriate counterparts in this facet of the economy. Other tourism infrastructural projects include the Oil Nut Bay multimillion dollar development, Nail Bay Virgin Gorda Development and the Nanny Cay Development. Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the new Chairman and the other members of the Tourist Board and the staff of the Tourist Board Office will work diligently to sustain the growth of our tourism product.

Opportunities

1. In addressing the matter of less activity in the two major components of our economy, we realize that to maintain current levels of activity, while accepting the retraction of major segments within it, the Government of the Virgin Islands will have to stimulate it through the implementation of various policies and programs. We thus intend to increase Government spending on development projects in the coming year. We will use this twist of fate as the springboard for major infrastructural improvements and developments within the Territory, thus providing our people with the opportunities needed to maintain their standard of living. We will do so while simultaneously correcting inadequacies and improving our existing public infrastructure. The caveat to this is that we must be very careful how we choose these projects. We must make choices based on thorough, in-depth analysis so as to ensure maximum benefit to all our citizens, and provide the best return for them on the investments made.

2. Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, this Honourable House passed the Development Fund Board Act and in the near future we would be appointing the members to the Board enabling the intension of the Act to be realized. An entrepreneur in various businesses would have the opportunity to access needed resources to develop their ideas and in the process stimulate the economy by creating jobs and providing revenue to Government.

3. Mr. Speaker, we will facilitate and be receptive to foreign investment opportunities coming onto our shores that are willing to live in harmony with our people and our treasured environment. We must ensure that every opportunity that presents itself is treated diligently and expeditiously at all levels of the Civil Service as well as at the Ministerial level.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

4. Mr. Speaker our promise resounds:
- We will courageously face and inevitably overcome our challenges
 - We will prudently manage the threats; and
 - In the midst of the fray we will create and take advantage of opportunities, to ensure that the good people of this Territory can live peacefully while storms rage around them.

Budget in Brief

1. Mr. Speaker, the budget that is presented before you has within it various provisions on which I will touch briefly. The most noticeable point however, is the fact that there is a projected decrease in revenue to be collected under that of the Budget of 2008 of some 1.7%, to result in projected revenue in 2009 of two hundred and seventy nine million, eight hundred and forty one thousand dollars (\$279,841,000). In this budget we have allotted the projected revenue as follows:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Operational Expenditure: | \$252,465,400 (two hundred and fifty two million, four hundred and sixty five thousand, four hundred dollars) |
| Development Fund: | \$ 23,875,600 (twenty three million, eight hundred and seventy five thousand, six hundred dollars) |
| Pension Fund | \$ 1,800,000 (one million, eight hundred thousand dollars) |
| Reserve Fund: | \$ 500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) |
| Emergency/Disaster Fund | \$ 500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) |
| Contingencies Fund: | \$ 500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) |
| Repairs and renewal Fund | \$ 200,000 (two hundred thousand dollars) |

2. Mr. Speaker, our annual debt servicing obligations of twelve million, four hundred and nineteen thousand, five hundred dollars (\$12,419,500) for 2009 has increased by 34.6% up from the nine million, two hundred twenty-four thousand, five hundred dollars (\$9,224,500) in 2008. For the period ending 31st December, 2008, the Public Debt (Central Government) stood at approximately seventy-four million, one hundred eighty-eight thousand, eight hundred and nine dollars (\$74,188,809). The National Debt, including contingent liabilities, was estimated to be one hundred and two million, three hundred and eighty thousand, seven hundred and fifty-eight dollars (\$102,380,758). *The National Debt for 2009 has also increased over that of 2008 by some twenty-seven million, four hundred and sixty-nine thousand, five hundred and twenty dollars (\$27,469,520) or twenty-seven percent (27%).* However, Mr. Speaker if the foregoing is examined in context with the Territory's estimated earnings from export of goods and services, I am confident that our debt servicing capabilities are sustainable. While we remain cognizant of the global economic climate, the sourcing of loan funds may become necessary to meet several important infrastructural projects inclusive of the hospital and the National Sewerage Project.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

3. Mr. Speaker, I can state as well that we must reduce the cost of operating the civil service and in this year there will be a focused drive to do this. Herein lays a fitting introduction Mr. Speaker, for an issue that has been with central Government for quite some time now, and which must be addressed. Whereas the cost of operating the Government is approximately 70% of the budget, salaries, benefits, and pensions make up a very sizeable portion, some forty three percent (43%), of the expenses of the Government of the Virgin Islands and any strategy to reduce cost would have to examine the value being received for this expenditure. I reiterate Government's commitment to tackle swiftly the areas such as vehicles and telephones that continue to be abused by officers.

4. Mr. Speaker, another area that is of growing concern is the pension liability on the Government of the Virgin Islands. The Pension Scheme is currently under review and on completion of consultation with the relevant stakeholders, a proposal would be brought to this Honourable House for its consideration.

Specific Initiatives

1. Mr. Speaker, I will now crave your indulgence as I shift our attention towards the initiatives that we have made provisions for in the budget document now before us. In order to ensure that our justice system is well resourced and pertinent to the needs of our society, there will be renovations and an extension made to the Magistrate's Court and we expect to complete the accommodations for the Commercial Court and the accompanying Registry during the course of this year. Provisions have also been made for the automation of the Civil Registry and the new design of a much needed Police Headquarters building. We will also mandate a Boundaries Commission to evaluate the pertinence of the existing district boundaries and if necessary propose changes to it.

2. Mr. Speaker, much has been written of late about the conditions at Her Majesty Prison. This Government will continue to provide the necessary resources to ensure that the Prison is in accordance with international standards and the laws of the Territory. In keeping with such standards, the services of a Parole Officer from the United Kingdom as a Consultant have been agreed for the period of two years intermittently. The Consultant is expected to train officers and advise Government on the subject matter.

3. Mr. Speaker, our law enforcement officers are doing their best to keep our borders secured. This task is a daunting one as more and more people take the leap of faith by travelling illegally in search of a better way of life. The cost of repatriation is high and unpredictable however, housing them is not an option we can consider at this time.

Infrastructure

1. Mr. Speaker, the rapid growth of vehicular traffic demands that we address our road infrastructure with the goal of eliminating the congestion that is occurring in certain areas. A consultancy firm has begun to review the extension of the dual carriageway and a proposal will be submitted to Government shortly.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

A firm has also been hired to install traffic lights at the roundabout by the market square area, in order to further promote the ease of movement and reduce and perhaps even eliminate traffic congestion within the capital.

2. The maintenance of all roads throughout the Territory is ongoing, including the Sister Islands. New feeder roads are being constructed and families now have access to their properties that they can now develop. One such road is the Nail Bay Road to the Valley that is nearing completion.

3. Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the Taxi and Liveries Commission is meant to regulate and harmonize discrepancies and confusion that has been occurring in the Territory in relation to the transportation industry.

4. Particular attention will be paid to the Fire and Rescue Services and their ability to affect their mandate effectively throughout the Territory. Two fire tenders are expected to arrive in the Territory in the next few months. One will be assigned to the East End/Long Look Fire Station and the other to Road Town. The BVI Airports Authority will provide for a Meteorological Officer, a Runway Sweeper, and examine the feasibility of purchasing additional rapid intervention vehicles to elevate safety standards.

5. Mr. Speaker, the sewerage project in the East End Long/Look area is scheduled to be restarted, and while we are doing this we expect to begin the renovation of the sewerage system in the Road Town area as well. The Government is actively sourcing the necessary funding to adequately finance these projects and bring needed relief to these areas. These projects are major undertakings and would create employment for many of our people from heavy equipment operators to contractors. More so, it will eliminate the health and environmental concerns that are present. The residents of East End/Long Look would appreciate that a proper sewerage system is dependent on a constant reliable source of water and this was provided thanks to Ocean Conversion in December, 2008.

6. Mr. Speaker, there are some reservoirs in the Territory that need replacement and repair and this must occur to reduce unaccounted water cost that has to be paid for by Government. Replacement of the Minton Hill reservoir in the Valley, Virgin Gorda is to commence shortly and it is expected that the reservoirs in Carrot Bay and Hodges Creek will be replaced or repaired in the very near future. The water distribution throughout the Territory will be expanded and we are pleased that the residents of the eastern end of the island now have reliable water supply.

7. In addition to the Cruise Ship pier mentioned previously, Mr. Speaker, major work at the West End Terminal is anticipated to start this year. This facility is a main Ferry Port and we are happy that progress is being made. The users of the facility would welcome a clean modern and artistic facility.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

I am pleased to announce that the agreement was reached with Little Dix Bay Resort for the land acquisition which would pave the way for the construction of the second dock in the Valley Virgin Gorda. This would eliminate the present hazard from the congestion from the role of the one jetty for cargo and ferry services. A survey of the site is being carried out and as soon as it is completed work will proceed accordingly. A report for the renovation of the Virgin Gorda Airport has been submitted and is being considered by Government.

Social Development and Health Care

1. Mr. Speaker, the primary objective of the services and projects undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Social Development is to provide leadership that promotes good health, social well being, and a safe environment that engenders sustainable living. In light of this Mr. Speaker, we will see to it that the most relevant and beneficial policies in regards to this component of our mandate is pursued to its fullest potential.

2. The new Peebles Hospital structure, even though changes were made to some aspects of the original design in what was considered in our view to be in the best interest of the people of this Territory, is scheduled optimistically to be completed in the second quarter of this year. The medical equipment that is essential to the functioning of the hospital is also expected to be installed sometime this year. The latest estimate to complete the hospital project is in the region of some eighty million dollars (\$80M).

3. Mr. Speaker, we are very much aware and concerned about our ability to manage solid waste in the Territory and in the first quarter of this year we expect that the new incinerator, capable of processing 100 tons a day, which is already on site, will soon be installed and operational. With a daily production of solid waste of up to ninety five (95) tons of waste, this incinerator, taken in tandem with the existing one at Pockwood Pond, should be able to meet our need for a clean and pollution free Virgin Islands.

4. Mr. Speaker, community centres serve as a focal point for the residents in our communities to meet and are also used for various public meetings. We will improve on existing centres and build new ones in various districts throughout the Territory as witnessed in the completion of the Cane Garden Bay Community Centre and the recent award of a contract for the construction of the Purcell Community Centre. Construction of the Community Centre planned for Virgin Gorda Sound to be completed by December 2006, will not be forgotten.

5. My Government has a strong commitment to improving and expanding on our health care facilities in the Territory and the Health Services Authority is presently conducting an assessment of all existing clinics. The assessment will determine not only the scope and relevance of the services being provided but also on the structural integrity of the buildings themselves. Mr. Speaker we are moving ahead with improving the medical services on Virgin Gorda. The award of a contract for the architectural design for the Medical Centre in the Valley Virgin Gorda is presently being considered by Government and in the near future a modern facility would be constructed.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

6. Mr. Speaker, in this very important portfolio, the dedicated Minister for Health and Social Development is exerting much time and energy in making sure that prudent policies in a vast cross section of areas such as the improvement of our drug and pharmaceutical services, our national AIDS programme, and port health issues among others, are being developed and pursued vigorously. In addition the Minister will be launching a Social Sector Analysis and a Response Planning Initiative that will look at:

- 1) The current level and mix of skills available within the Social Development Department, and the wider community
- 2) Strengthening where necessary, the legal and institutional framework for action and protection
- 3) Placing greater emphasis on partnership, community participation and inter-sectoral collaboration in an effort to build capacity within and among the sectors.

7. This analysis will be essential to us being able to ensure that the Ministry of Health and Social Development is able to develop and implement the relevant policies to maintain and improve our mandate in this sector.

Education

1. Mr. Speaker, to maintain our place as one of the centres of excellence in the region and in the global village at large, it is important that we educate and train our people. In order to do this it is our intent to harness the skill of the people in our society. More so we will develop the natural talents and abilities of our young people by providing suitable avenues where their skills and intelligence can not only be demonstrated but contribute to the well being of our community. The requirements of our educational system are increasing, and with it our need to equip ourselves to adequately meet the challenges.

2. On assumption of office in 2007, this Government recognized that the standard of reading by our children was below par and that the achievement scores of our children were neither high enough nor improving as expected. Retired teachers were rehired to undertake improving the reading standards. Great strides have been observed not only in our students' reading ability but in their overall academic performance.

3. To prepare our teachers with the needed tools to perform at a higher level, we have collaborated with the University of the West Indies and the H. Laverty Stoutt Community College to provide a Bachelor of Education Degree Program, which commenced in the Fall of 2008 and in which twenty (20) of our teachers are now enrolled. We expect that eventually all of our teachers will be trained at least at the Bachelors level.

4. Mr. Speaker, the activities taking place in education in the past year and planned for this budget are not only ambitious, but multifaceted and forward looking as well. Some of the programmes that are taking place to develop our educational system are as follows:

- 1) Accreditation of our schools
- 2) The utilization of retired teachers to supplement and enhance the delivery of material to students

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

- 3) Working to enhance the certifications and qualifications of nationals in the Financial Services Industry
- 4) Ensuring the accountability of our education system through regular reporting and evaluation
- 5) Enabling monthly grade level meetings with teachers in our schools
- 6) Revision and implementation of the National Curriculum
- 7) Initiation of a youth development programme aimed at motivating and empowering the youth
- 8) Initiation of a television homework help programme
- 9) Documentation of the history of education in the Virgin Islands.
- 10) Assisting schools through Government initiated public private partnership in education through the Adopt a School Programme.

5. Mr. Speaker through our newly established Department of Culture we will finalize a National Cultural Policy and particular attention will be paid to the restoration of historical sites and cultural activities in the Territory. It is fitting Mr. Speaker, at this juncture to mention that such an historical site --The Palm Grove Park, will be renamed on 1st March, 2009 in honour of Mr. Noel Lloyd. During this time, a statue of Mr. Noel Lloyd will be unveiled in addition to a plaque depicting the history of the Positive Action Movement. Our youths, as the future leaders of tomorrow, will benefit from the development and implementation of the programmes associated with a National Youth Policy. We will also launch an Elite Athlete Programme to promote and enhance the skills and talents of our gifted and upcoming athletes.

6. Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise therefore, that we will have to embark on various capital projects to ensure that our standard of educational and recreational facilities throughout the Territory are kept very high. This includes major works to be carried out at the Francis Lettsome Primary School, construction of the staffroom at the Willard Wheatley Primary School, improvements to the Green Land Recreational Facility and improvements to the Virgin Gorda Recreation Grounds at South Valley and North Sound.

7. The Government continues to finance the HLSCC operations to guarantee that tertiary education is available to the residents of the Territory. Progress is being made with the European Union with counterpart funding for the Culinary Arts Centre that is envisioned to be a regional culinary arts training facility.

The Environment and our Natural Resources

1. Mr. Speaker, in light of happenings in the world economy, our Agricultural sector must play an important component of any policy going forward, aimed at increasing our ability to supply our own needs. Based on this policy direction Mr. Speaker, we have since last year, embarked on a project to install greenhouses on the mainland of Tortola and on Virgin Gorda which will be capable of producing enough vegetables to supply the market for these products within the Virgin Islands.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

Mr. Speaker, the impact of the successful implementation of this programme cannot be overemphasized as it will not only produce fresh organic products but will also reduce our reliance on imports to feed our people.

2. Mr. Speaker, you may recall that in our first meeting of 2009 we brought to this Honourable House a bill to provide import duty relief to registered farmers in the Virgin Islands. In addition to this we will step up the level of assistance that we give to farmers in this community who have made up their minds to pursue this calling. There are also plans to upgrade the Road Town Market and build a new abattoir to meet USDA standards.

3. Land is a commodity that strikes the heart and soul of the Virgin Islander, and in recognition of this, we have in the past year, continued to resolve the land allocation issues on Anegada and expect that the final loose ends in relation to this matter will be tied up within the coming months. You may recall as well Mr. Speaker, that we gave out titles to well deserving citizens of Virgin Gorda for lots at the North Sound sub-division in December of last year at a token price plus statutory fees. Awardees, some that have occupied and used the land for sometime, would be in a better position to secure funding to construct their dwelling homes without the additional burden of paying for the property simultaneously. Economic development is anticipated, especially in the construction industry and other related commerce activity.

4. Mr. Speaker, the acquisition of property at Smugglers Cove is expected to be completed this year. The first payment was made last year and the final payment will be prepared on completion of the passage of these estimates. It is the Government's intension to utilize crown land at the Valley Virgin Gorda which is currently being surveyed for distribution to first time home owners in a couple of months. Mr. Speaker, we have heard the cries of our people, and we are answering their calls.

5. Special attention is being paid to the labour force of the Virgin Islands. The Government is cognizant of the need for expediency in processing the applications that come through the Labour Department. However, we must make sure that the needs of the people of this Territory are met first, while at the same time, ensuring that our people are not marginalized. To this end we have begun to examine very closely, the existing procedures in the department with the goal of protecting the interests of our citizens.

6. Mr. Speaker, we know that there will be challenges, and obstacles to overcome, but we also know that the people of this Territory have a history of ingenuity, resolve and a solid work ethic. With these traits we know that we can weather the storms that are brewing ahead. Mr. Speaker, we do sincerely and honestly believe that with the divine guidance of the most high God and with the fervent prayers of our people, we can withstand the storm. Nature's Little Secrets can continue to be a happy and peaceful haven but we must also be vigilant. We must learn to support our Policemen and women who work night and day to guard our shores, protect our waters, guard us and protect us when we are asleep in our beds or out liming. These men and women dedicate themselves for the Territory and our cause.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

As they celebrate Police Week and the 49th year of the Royal Virgin Islands Force, remember to keep them in your prayers and pray that they will have faith and strength and determination to continue the good job they are doing. Remember also a new organisation, the Virgin Islands Cadet Corps has at last been organized and the launching will take place on Tuesday 3rd March, 2009 at the Elmore Stoutt High School at 9:00 a.m. May I take this opportunity to invite all here present to the dedication of the Noel Lloyd/Positive Action Movement Park on Sunday 1st March, 2009 at 3:00 p.m. at the Palm Groove Park and to the programme in honour of the late Hamilton Lavity Stoutt who served in this Honourable House for thirty seven (37) years and became the first Chief Minister.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Mr. Speaker I would like to close by acknowledging the various contributions of those that have made this budget possible thus far. At the beginning of this Mr. Speaker, must be the dedicated and hardworking members of the public service, led by His Excellency the Governor, senior and junior officers from within Central Government itself and the Statutory Bodies. Among these as well Mr. Speaker, I must make special mention of the Ministry of Finance for their support in the production of the document which I now lay before this Honourable House.

2. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express gratitude and appreciation to the various entities within our borders and beyond who have advised, supported, and worked with us. I would like to mention the UK Government and its agencies, most notably the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Department for International Development; the Caribbean Development Bank, European Investment Bank, the European Union Commission, the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, and the Organization for Eastern Caribbean States. Special thanks as well must be given to the Social Security Board, Banco Popular, Scotia Bank, First Caribbean International Bank, First Bank and the National Bank of the Virgin Islands for their continued interest and contributions to the welfare of and good corporate citizenship to the community.

3. Mr. Speaker my colleagues on both sides of the House deserve my gratitude as well, as they have worked tirelessly and diligently over the past year to make sure that the people's business is done. To you as well Mr. Speaker, I express on their behalf, as well as mine, appreciation to you and your staff for maintaining the professionalism and fairness of this House.

4. In closing Mr. Speaker, I would like to especially thank the dear people of this Territory for not only their confidence in this Honourable House, but for their continued hard work, resolve to abide by the laws of this country, and their sacrifice in preparing Nature's Little Secrets for their children and grandchildren. It is for them and in their stead, that I present this Budget to this Honourable House.

5. Thank You, Mr. Speaker.

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

Notes

Facing Threats and Capitalizing on Opportunities

Notes

Financial Secretary

Neil M. Smith

Deputy Financial Secretary (Ag.)

Lucia C. Lettsome

Budget Unit

Diane Parsons

Delroy Jennings

Trecia Thomas-Maduro

C. Jovita Mercer-Scatliffe

Daphne Frett

Rhonda Glasgow

Jeremy Vanterpool

Michelynne Bassue (In-Service Training)

Nardia Thomas

Accounts Unit

Maria Smith-Thomas

Myra Maynard

Tristan Mills

Administration Unit

Darlene Forbes

Colette Callwood

Vicki Samuel-Lettsome

Althea Richardson-Crandall

Kareem Thomas

Dotsie Penn-Tolbert

Mauricia Henry

Jahmal Rabsatt

Veronica Singh

Joey Thomas

Procurement Unit

Ishma Hodge-Rhymer

Lenia Smith-Hodge

Lilian George

Diana Percell-Gumbs

Vinnice Harrigan

Project Support Services Unit

Shaina Smith

Kevi Potter

Barbara Pickering-St. Rose

Debra Maddox

Tracey Flax

Duane Fraites

Carline Prentice

Human Resources Unit

Jeremy Hodge

Simera Durante

Leann Hill

Policy/Special Projects

Arnold Lettsome

Jenifer O'Neal

Jeremiah Frett

Cecile Jardine