

**AN OPEN LETTER TO
THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS**

I write this missive as a concerned Bahamian citizen on behalf of and with reference to the future of Long Island. We are mindful of the present economic circumstances faced by the Government and appreciate their good work in successfully managing this dilemma. However, we need bear in mind that "the FNM could send anyone down to Long Island and the residents would vote for them". Despite this certifiable fact, Long Island remains off the short list of islands pegged for improvement(s) and necessary infrastructure. Despite this fact, Long Island has always supported the FNM even when it was un-popular to do so. Furthermore, the record reflects that every facet of our country has been influenced by Long Islander's with particular reference to the number of Parliamentarians, successful businesspersons, the intelligentsia and work ethic of its people. Regardless of the appreciable contribution (i.e. financial, intellectual, cultural, etc. etc.) by Long Islanders to the growth, advancement and overall success of The Bahamas, Long Island remains barely accessible.

It would be prudent to note that without the necessary infrastructure Long Island remains incapable of being developed in any meaningful manner. It is a well known fact that the airport at Deadman's Cay and related facilities needs to be upgraded as this particular facility remains a hazard and a disgrace to Long Islanders in particular and The Bahamas in general. Today the **"terminal building remains an outhouse of 1960's style and fashion."** Bahamians and foreigners alike have to wait under the tree shade until departure out of necessity and not by choice. Other than the annual Regatta and preceding general elections, Long Island remains unattended. Much to the resident's detriment, the representative may not feel **"empowered"** to raise the cry or concerns together with the fact that Long Islanders are too proud to ask for assistance in fear of being deemed dependant or needy. Long Islanders have therefore been forced to assist the duly elected representative in this regard and by way of this communiqué.

Long Islanders can find some comfort in the fact that the Minister for Tourism and Minister of State for Finance readily admit and confirm that the **"ability to fill airplane seats and bring stopover visitors back to these shores en masse"** represents the immediate recovery hopes for our country. However, it may be prudent to use this opportunity to remind the good Minister(s) that an investment in a **"DEADMAN'S CAY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"** may be completed at no cost to Government and shall serve to benefit not only the public purse but more importantly those diehards who have supported this administration without ever yielding. Hence, it would be refreshing to see that the Government of The Bahamas uses its ability to draw upon the availability of European Union Grant Funding to commence and complete the Deadman's Cay International Airport Project. It must be minded that the Project was previously approved under the former administration which has since been shelved even after being promised during the last general elections. The Project as known to successive administrations was earmarked to include the following:

- (1) The relocation of the abutting residences and commercial premises from the airfield which is inconsistent with ICAO standard requirements, all of which remain inherently dangerous;
- (2) Construction of a modern terminal building and tarmac similar to the facility at Rock Sound, Eleuthera or at Grand Bahama International Airport (Domestic) to include the construction of adequate parking facilities, modern restaurant facilities, commercial rental spaces, craft and gift stores, information center for both local and international visitors to Long Island.
- (3) Extension of the runway to accommodate larger aircraft (jet) related traffic and provide suitable lighting to accommodate night and emergency flights.
- (4) Permit the establishment of a private Fixed Base Operation or fuel service presently unavailable.
- (5) Engage in negotiations with the private sector to complete the foregoing by way of a symbiotic relationship benefiting Long Island and its people should the Government be unable or not desirous of commencing and/or completing the same.

Each and every Long Islander should note that almost twenty two (22) million dollars of joint funding provided by the European Union and Government of the Bahamas is being spent on the 300 souls which inhabit Acklins Island and 37 souls which inhabit Rum Cay. While they are Bahamians and are no less deserving of infrastructure, surely Long Island would have been a better more logical choice for these investments. However, this begs the question as to whether Long Island and its people are any less deserving? Or has the traditional support of the governing party caused Long Island to be taken for granted and left off of the list of real and present concerns? What is the proposed development plan for Long Island and related timelines?

Notwithstanding, other potential projects which may bear fruit for Long Islanders and which the Government needs to ruminate over, may comprise of a Cruise Terminal at Clarence Town (ala Princess Cays), a mini-hospital, focused strategic development of boutique resorts, expansion of duty free allowances for Long Islanders that want to build 2nd homes, incentives for those going into business in the family islands, increased moorings in Clarence Town, greater marketing for the existing rental properties and the ability to receive cable television at the northern and southern regions of Long Island. The economic activity created by such infrastructural projects would allow the island to grow.

In closing, I respectfully suggest to the electorate and constituents of Long Island that all and sundry consider these matters before pledging support for any proposed or incumbent representative as the "Salt of the Earth People of Long Island" rightfully demand delivery and not ill-fated promises. We trust that this FNM GOVERNMENT has not forgotten the people of Long Island, but yet again, no one realizes that you are hurt unless and until you cry out!