



# **COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS**

## **CONTRIBUTION**

**BY**

**HON. GINGER MOXEY, M.P.**

**PINERIDGE CONSTITUENCY**

**The Honourable House of Assembly**

**Speech from the Throne**

**November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021**

**Madam Speaker** and Colleagues of this honourable house, Good Evening.

It is with great humility and gratitude that I rise for the first time in this honourable place, on behalf of the **resilient people of Pineridge**. To God be the Glory; Great things He hath done!

**Madam Speaker**, with your leave, I would like to thank the wonderful constituents of Pineridge for their overwhelming support in the recent general election; and to express my gratitude for the confidence they have demonstrated in me and my ability to represent them in this honorable chamber. Make no mistake, I recognize the magnitude of the task set before me, and consider it an awesome responsibility. There is an enormous amount of work to be done. I have no misconception about the gravity of the situation before us. Although times are challenging, I would like to assure the residents of Pineridge that **I have your back** and I will give it my all. I will leave no stone unturned when it comes to matters that affect your lives, and the lives of your families. I will work tirelessly to improve your conditions, and to fulfill the promise I made to you to **inspire hope, enable opportunities, and deliver results**.

**Madam Speaker**, I would like to say a special thank you to my family, campaign manager, coordinators, executive team, office staff, and hundreds of dedicated volunteers and like-minded servant leaders, who partnered with me during my political campaign, and continue on today. Thank you all for the love and kindness, the energy, and the unwavering support.

**Madam Speaker,** recently we held our 1<sup>st</sup> Pineridge Constituency Entrepreneurship Seminar, which included sessions in marketing, branding, funding, providing stellar customer service and the legal aspects of ownership, for interested Pineridge residents. The seminar was booked to capacity, as our people look for opportunities to advance themselves. The next one will be held very soon. We also had a powerful thank you church service for the residents of Pineridge last Sunday, and a 'Breast Cancer Awareness Seminar' where residents spoke one-on-one with medical professionals.

**Madam Speaker,** through you I wish to advise residents to stay tuned to our 'Ginger for the People' social media pages for information about upcoming programs and events. We have a 10 point action agenda for Pineridge, which my team and I intend to carry out over the next five (5) years. I also wish to advise residents that I will be available for office hours beginning Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 4:00pm – 8:00pm. Please contact the constituency office to secure an appointment.

**Madam Speaker,** we are working on an aggressive agenda to get speed bumps, street signs and lighting installed, and road works commissioned, in communities throughout Pineridge. Also, many of our programs listed under our **10 Point Agenda for Pineridge** are in advanced stages for launch. We will work simultaneously to bring relief, create opportunities and enhance the lives of Pineridge residents.

**Madam Speaker,** I too congratulate you on your election as Speaker of this Honourable house. And forgive me in advance for how many times I will say '**Madam Speaker**' but it gives me so much joy. This is so significant as you are the second woman to hold such an office. I also wish to congratulate all my parliamentary colleagues for securing their seats in this honourable place, especially my six (6) female counterparts and political sisters. This is certainly a new day!

**Madam Speaker,** I wish to also thank His Excellency Sir Cornelius Smith for delivering such an impactful speech at the opening of Parliament on Wednesday October 6<sup>th</sup>. The Speech from the Throne outlined many of our administration's innovative policies, as well as its plans to address the challenges that we face.

**Madam Speaker,** as stated in "Our Blueprint for Change," what we saw happen in our country over the past four and a half years is an indication of what goes wrong when there is no vision, no plan, and no execution strategy. But it's a new day! And I am excited to be a part of a team of servant leaders who have worked from Day One with a dynamic vision; a strategic plan; and a robust execution strategy to address the needs of the Bahamian people, who will finally be able to say "It's indeed the people's time!"

That being said, **Madam Speaker,** I express my appreciation to the Honourable Member for Cat Island, Rum Cay and San Salvador for the confidence he expressed in me by appointing me as the first female Minister for Grand Bahama. As a resident of Grand Bahama and a business owner, I am

well aware of the challenges that we have faced over the past two decades and the work that needs to be done to recover, rebuild and revolutionize our island and economy. I pledge to do the people's business, and to utilize every resource at my disposal to get the job done!

**Madam Speaker,** I believe in 'Partnerships for Development' and in order to truly move Grand Bahama forward, this will be the philosophy by which I serve. These partnerships call for a collaborative effort and unity; as we are all in this together. The Ministry for Grand Bahama is tasked with coordination and liaison with other Ministries to get the job done. It is also the Ministry that manages the relationship with The Grand Bahama Port Authority, and the revitalization and promotion of Grand Bahama as a tourism and industrial center. My Ministry is also responsible for the promotion of agricultural development, advancement of health and educational infrastructure, and the promotion of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. My Ministry is also tasked with the development of the Grand Bahama International Airport and community rehabilitation and restoration in East and West Grand Bahama.

**Madam Speaker,** as we can all see, my Ministry is grounded in 'Partnerships for Development,' working together, building alliances for success, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that Grand Bahama Island excels. Without it, our efforts will be futile. So, I implore the Honorable Members of this House, to join me, as we collectively take Grand Bahama to the next level of success.

**Madam Speaker,** ‘The speech from the Throne’ clearly demonstrates the way forward as it focused on a number of matters that have been affecting the people of Grand Bahama that require immediate attention.

Firstly, **Madam Speaker,** as I would’ve echoed many times before, the people of Grand Bahama are hurting, some hopeless, many need a roof over their heads, they need food, basic necessities, and opportunities to make money to pay for it all. Many are without power, water and other utilities while others still have tarps on roofs since Dorian.

For this reason, **Madam Speaker,** this administration’s commitment in the Speech from the Throne to “introduce measures that will bring immediate relief to the Bahamian people and to businesses” is of utmost importance at this time. The Member for West Grand Bahama and Bimini and the Member for Marathon will lay out their plans for Social Services and Urban Development when they speak on Thursday. My Ministry will work closely with this Ministry to eliminate the high levels of suffering throughout Grand Bahama. Our collective mandate is to bring relief to the many who have lost their jobs, their homes, and now struggle daily to survive.

**Madam Speaker,** the people of Pineridge are happy about the amendment to the VAT Act, which will lower the rate of VAT across the board to 10 percent. Our seniors are also thrilled about their increase in pension. Our people are also excited about the proposed increase in minimum wage, as well as the phase-in of a livable wage. The reintroduction of the RISE Card is also a big win for the most vulnerable in our communities.

**Madam Speaker,** within a few days of this administration's return to office, the Grand Bahama Power Company (GBPC) officially made an application to The Grand Bahama Port Authority (GBPA) for a rate adjustment. This administration made immediate inquiries, expressed our deep concern, and took swift action. Many residents also expressed their frustration with the thought of being further burdened in a time that they can barely afford to keep their lights on.

**Madam Speaker,** we made it clear that while we understand that the filing is a part of an established regulatory framework, we will not support any rate increase on any portion of the customer base on Grand Bahama Island at this time; as it is our firm position that the people of Grand Bahama should not be further burdened on the heels of the economic stagnation caused by Hurricanes Matthew and Dorian, which was compounded by the global pandemic.

**Madam Speaker,** with your leave I want to let the people of Grand Bahama know that this administration will ensure that our policies demonstrate a level of compassion for the plight of our people and businesses; and will encourage corporate Grand Bahama to do the same. It's a new day; and Grand Bahamians will finally experience relief after being neglected for four and a half years from an administration that they gave five (5) seats to in 2017.

**Madam Speaker,** two weeks ago, I, along with The Member for Fort Charlotte and Minister of Works and Utilities, and senior technical officers of

his Ministry, as well as the Member for East Grand Bahama, toured the communities of East End, which were ravaged by Hurricane Dorian. It was disheartening to view firsthand the horrible conditions and disrepair of so many of the public facilities, including schools, and to speak directly to residents and local government officials who echoed the need for immediate intervention. We committed to assisting to rebuild their communities and to ensure that the people of these areas receive the attention that they so rightfully deserve from our caring government. Last Thursday, I had a follow-up meeting with the East Grand Bahama District of Local Government, to progress their agenda.

**Madam Speaker,** as a member of a compassionate government, I was pleased to announce this administration's Special Economic Recovery Zone (SERZ) Amendment, which will allow persons who lost their vehicles during the storm to import a replacement vehicle duty-free, as well as to transport their vehicles to other islands without having to pay custom duties.

**Madam Speaker,** with this amendment, persons whose applications were previously approved but were not used before the expiration date, can now use this approval to import their vehicles duty free. In addition, new applicants on Grand Bahama Island can apply at The Ministry for Grand Bahama.

**Madam Speaker,** in 'Our Blueprint for Change,' this administration pledged "to provide committed leadership to address the needs of disaster victims..." The SERZ amendment is a first in a number of relief measures that

this administration made happen to provide immediate relief for the people of Grand Bahama.

**Madam Speaker,** a number of residents have already contacted my ministry and will take advantage of this opportunity.

**Madam Speaker,** in the Speech from the Throne the Davis Administration committed to building a new hospital on the island of Grand Bahama through public-private partnerships. This is welcomed news for our island, since residents have decried the need for a proper tertiary medical facility and have had to travel to the capital to receive treatment, for years.

**Madam Speaker,** recently I had a meeting with representatives from Doctor's Hospital, who have committed to build and open a state-of-the-art medical facility, located on the Mall Drive, downtown Freeport.

**Madam Speaker,** this multi-million dollar investment will not only provide hundreds of training and employment opportunities for Grand Bahama, but will expand our medical tourism product, and provide Grand Bahamians with the options for receiving specialized health care services that have been nonexistent on the island.

**Madam Speaker,** two weeks ago I toured the site for the new Doctors Hospital, and was also apprised of plans to establish an Access Care facility in Eight Mile Rock for family medicine practice, as well as dialysis services.

There will also be Stat Lab at this facility in West Grand Bahama that opens in January, 2022.

**Madam Speaker,** I met with representatives of the breast cancer survivor support groups “In The Pink” and Mammography Access Program (MAP), during which they lamented the lack of available treatments on the island of Grand Bahama. I am elated, therefore, that the Doctors Hospital ‘Flagship’ facility in Freeport will open next Fall, and that women on Grand Bahama will have access to state-of-the-art equipment, and be able to receive medical care without having to travel to the capital.

**Madam Speaker,** I look forward to the completion of this project, and the positive impact that it will have on our economy, our healthcare system and our people! But I also assure the people of Grand Bahama of this administration's commitment to the advancement of healthcare on our island.

**Madam Speaker,** I, along with the Member for Tall Pines, and Minister of Health and Wellness have met with Grand Bahama Health Services executives to discuss the challenges, as well as the way forward to address these challenges in the shortest time frame.

**Madam Speaker,** I wish through you to acknowledge and recognize the healthcare workers on Grand Bahama. Our front line workers, having experienced loss themselves, persevered through Hurricane Dorian, the pandemic, and poor working conditions to offer stellar services to their fellow Grand Bahamians. I commend you and I assure you that I will work tirelessly to ensure that your working conditions are enhanced.

**Madam Speaker,** the Speech from the throne also expresses this administration's mission to "promote Grand Bahama to harness the power of the maritime industry." As we are all aware, the island of Grand Bahama is known for its industrial sector, which is home to a number of maritime operations including The Grand Bahama Shipyard, which provide substantial revenue for the island, as well as hundreds of jobs. The Shipyard is currently undergoing three hundred fifty million dollar (\$350,000,00) in reinvestment that bodes well for Grand Bahama Island, at large.

**Madam Speaker,** during our last administration, the Grand Bahama Shipyard Employment Program was established with the goal of training, certifying and employing six hundred (600) Bahamians to replace expatriate workers at the facility. Up to May, 2017, two hundred and fifty (250) Bahamians were trained and employed at the G.B. Shipyard, which was a remarkable accomplishment. The program was discontinued in 2017; but as job creation is one of our top priorities, it is this administration's plan to facilitate training, certification and placement for tradesmen. The work to recover, rebuild and revolutionize this initiative has already begun, since this is what happens in a new day!

**Madam Speaker,** in the Maritime Industry, Bahamian entrepreneur and Pineridge Businessman, Mr. Elbert Hepburn is doing something amazing. He has created a 'Maritime Training Institute' to introduce the world of maritime to the young people of Grand Bahama. I applaud Mr. Hepburn for this exciting initiative, and have partnered with him for a program called 'Maritime 101'.

**Madam Speaker,** while I am on the topic of Maritime, I beg leave to congratulate Coral Vita, a Grand Bahama based enterprise, on winning the Earthshot Prize; a global climate change project established by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

**Madam Speaker,** Coral Vita was the winner in the “Revive Our Oceans” category for its contributions to the restoration of coral reefs by growing resilient, sustainable coral and replanting them for further growth and reproduction in their natural habitat.

**Madam Speaker,** this administration is committed to making Grand Bahama the Resilience Center for the Caribbean by building ‘just-in-time’ logistics and transshipment capability for distributing equipment and supplies in the aftermath of natural disasters. Having experienced so many devastating hurricanes, we are well-positioned to lead the way, as the gateway for the region.

**Madam Speaker,** the Speech from the throne further indicates that this administration will capitalize on the ongoing successes of the industrial sector on Grand Bahama and use the investment arm of the Ministry for Grand Bahama to create a one-stop shop to attract new local and direct foreign investment.

**Madam Speaker,** within our last term of office, we leveled the playing field for residents and business owners in East and West Grand Bahama and

all areas outside the Port Area, by way of an amendment to the Tariff Act in July 2014. Because of this amendment, business owners in the “outskirts” of Freeport were able to receive similar benefits as Licensees of the Grand Bahama Port Authority.

**Madam Speaker,** it is our expectation that many other Grand Bahamians will take advantage of this initiative, save thousands of dollars through concessions, reinvest these savings, expand their business, and create more jobs for Bahamians in the outlying settlements.

**Madam Speaker,** on his first official visit to Grand Bahama, The Honourable Member for The Exumas and Ragged Island expressed his commitment to finding a solution to the Grand Lucayan mess created by the former administration, as well as providing concessions to encourage domestic and foreign direct investment in the island of Grand Bahama. I look forward to, in collaboration with the Member for Garden Hills, introducing a number of initiatives to support and grow the cultural and creative economy on Grand Bahama, which I believe will stimulate investment.

**Madam Speaker,** the Speech from the Throne also echoed this administration’s commitment to re-launch and formalize the “Sports in Paradise” programme, to encourage major international sports federations and leagues to use The Bahamas as a base.

Therefore, **Madam Speaker,** I am so pleased that the Member for Garden Hills and Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture came to Grand Bahama

to assess the state of our sporting facilities. I am excited about the proposed construction of a multipurpose sporting facility and shelter, which will not only service local athletes, but will attract and house world class events. It will be a new day for sports and for tourism on our island!

**Madam Speaker**, while I am on the topic of sports, with your leave, I would like to congratulate Jonquel Jones, a native of West Grand Bahama, who won the title of 2021 Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the WNBA. This is a spectacular milestone in Jonquel's career; and is a testament to her talent, determination, and dedication. Jonquel, we are so proud of you, we salute you, and we wish you all the best.

**Madam Speaker**, in the 'Speech from the Throne' this administration pledged to expedite the development of an airport on Grand Bahama, through Public Private Partnerships.

**Madam Speaker**, this is welcomed news for the people of Grand Bahama as we have not had a fully functioning airport since the passage of Hurricane Dorian. The people are looking forward to a redeveloped airport with our much-needed preclearance facilities. As you Honourable Members have all heard, the Member for The Exumas and Ragged Island has assured us that this is a priority under his portfolio. Our tour of the airport and control tower reinforced the need for revolutionary changes.

**Madam Speaker**, since my appointment as Minister, I have met with and continue to engage stakeholders and residents on the island. Many have expressed their agreement with our administration's commitment to focus on

the affairs of Grand Bahama through my ministry and have pledged their support of our plans.

**Madam Speaker,** I have also had meetings with a number of groups who are willing and ready to make investments in downtown Grand Bahama, which does my heart well as these align with my 'Downtown Alive' initiative as Member of Parliament for Pineridge.

**Madam Speaker,** the Downtown of a City is the heart of the City. It is where the people go. For Grand Bahama, the City is surrounded by urban communities and the way it has died tells the story of the journey of Freeport.

**Madam Speaker,** under my watch, Downtown Freeport will come alive! It will come alive to bring real culture into the city. It will allow immersive, authentic experiences that tell the Bahamian story. The Farmer's Market will offer products that makes tourist want to come. All stalls will become opened to offer Bahamian food and products. The Agricultural site next door will be redeveloped to allow new entrepreneurial opportunities. The Member for Central and South Eleuthera will be in Grand Bahama in the next two (2) weeks, as we quickly get things moving. We will assist these entrepreneurs, every step of the way, because we need this type of product to ensure that our people are able to benefit from the many visitors who will be looking for something authentically Bahamian to do.

**Madam Speaker,** I recently met with Franklyn Butler to discuss plans for the former Winn Dixie and Pantry Pride (Grand Union) properties, and toured the property. It is their intent to reopen the food store, as well as to

provide spaces for lease for essential services. These will play a critical role in the revitalization of Downtown, Freeport.

**Madam Speaker,** I also met with Dr. Ian Strachan, Campus President of University of the Bahamas North, and his executive team. I was impressed by their resilience and desire to move forward despite the present conditions.

But **Madam Speaker,** I was even more intrigued by their well-articulated plan to rebuild a new campus for UB North in the downtown area, while repurposing the East Grand Bahama campus, totally ravaged by Hurricane Dorian, as a research center.

**Madam Speaker,** I am delighted that within the next few weeks, an agreement will be signed and UB North will begin the process of rebuilding a state of the art campus with dormitories in Downtown Freeport!

**Madam Speaker,** I am excited about these two major projects as among other things, they will provide much needed employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for Grand Bahamians, and provide that aesthetic and economic boost that downtown has needed for a very long time. It's a new day!

**Madam Speaker,** this administration has an awesome opportunity and responsibility to put all of our innovative plans into action and begin the complex process of navigating our way out of the dilemmas we find ourselves in today.

**Madam Speaker,** Grand Bahama in particular, is experiencing tremendous economic challenges that could have been lessened. Nevertheless, this administration will put this country back on the right track through a commitment to execute our goals and put Bahamians first. And with unemployment at an all-time high, and youth unemployment even higher, I firmly believe that we can rebuild with resiliency through Bahamian entrepreneurship.

**Madam Speaker,** through you, I would like to call on Bahamians who have the means, to not leave your assets passive. Yes, we have been battered and bruised, but Grand Bahama is coming back stronger than ever before. I believe that we are on the cusp of finally realizing this ‘great potential’ that we have preached about over the many years. My plea to you is to become involved in rebuilding a resilient Grand Bahama. My Ministry is here to assist you. We can do this together. In fact, many have already reached out, and we are truly about to revolutionize our island and our country, with empowered Bahamians taking a lead role.

**Madam Speaker,** the Member for The Exumas and Ragged Island has stated that there is interest in investment in The Bahamas like never before. I am aware of some of these projects, and we will get some projects into Grand Bahama, but we must build our country with our own hands. The Bahamas belongs to us, and we have every right to participate fully in our economy.

- This is the time for innovation and creativity!
- It’s the time for boutique resorts and Air BnBs... create the solution for lack of rooms available on the island!

- It's the time for new tourism product development... with two new cruise port terminals on the horizon!
- Grand Bahama... it's the time for manufacturing authentically-made Bahamian products.
- It's time to dust off those ideas that you've shelved. Now is the time for our people and our island to reach its potential!

**Madam Speaker,** 'Our Blueprint for Change' outlines the way forward for our country and clearly states our government's commitment to recover, rebuild and revolutionize our country.

Today, for Grand Bahama, there are ongoing projects that include:

- The Grand Bahama Shipyard reinvestment
- Doctors 'Flag-Ship' Hospital in Freeport
- Doctors Hospital Access Care Facility in Eight Mile Rock
- Carnival Cruise Port Development
- Royal Caribbean Cruise Port Development
- Milo Butler & Sons Downtown Development
- University of The Bahamas Downtown Campus
- Western Atlantic Medical School
- Ginn Proposed Re-Development
- Eight Mile Rock Administration Complex
- Holmes Rock Jr. High School
- And Other Capital Works Projects

And the Grand Lucayan Redevelopment; New Hospital with Oncology Center; and a Redeveloped Airport with a focus on logistics are high on the agenda of our Davis-led Administration.

**Madam Speaker,** developing a Master Plan for Grand Bahama Island is high on my agenda. Just as we've set out to harness the power of the maritime industry, including transshipment and logistics with spinoff opportunities for Bahamians; we will become the events and entertainment capital of The Bahamas; and also be known as the island of innovation.

**Madam Speaker,** we are also building a Ministry for Grand Bahama that is responsive to the cries of Grand Bahamians... that hears our plight, that advocates on our behalf, that ensures that we are not left behind. A ministry that addresses some of the vexing challenges that have plagued us so long. We are developing systems to increase efficiency, improve customer service, seamlessly connect with other government ministries, agencies and departments to get results, and respond accordingly.

The mere fact that so many of my cabinet colleagues visited Grand Bahama Island so quickly in our new administration is a clear demonstration of our commitment to Grand Bahama Island and getting the job done! We are united in this. For far too long our island and our people have been neglected. Today is indeed a new day! All hands are on deck, and we're gonna get it done!

**Madam Speaker,** I want a Grand Bahama where you can feel 'Compassionate Leadership.'

I want a Grand Bahama where instead of sending out mass eviction notices right after elections, after the struggles of Dorian and the pandemic, that plans are worked out to keep Bahamians in their homes;

I want a Grand Bahama where people are treated with dignity when they are at their lowest and in need of assistance.

But more importantly, I want a Grand Bahama where people are thriving, living their best lives, taking advantage of the opportunities presented, and taking their rightful place in our country.

In conclusion, **Madam Speaker**, the people of this country spoke loudly on September 16<sup>th</sup> and asked for a new day! Cognizant of the fact that we are tasked with creating a resilient Bahamas, while rebuilding the islands devastated by hurricanes; rather than going on vacation like the previous administration, we rolled up our sleeves and immediately got to work.

**Madam Speaker**, this is truly a brand-new day and definitely a new chapter for our country. There is no doubt in my mind that our people are ready for 'their' time, and for us to change the trajectory of our nation.

Pineridge and Grand Bahama residents, I admonish you, through **Madam Speaker**, in the words of Mother Teresa, "None of us, including me, ever do great things. But we can all do small things, with great love, and together we can do something wonderful." I am committed to building a constituency and island that will benefit and empower Bahamians; but I need your help, your support, your patience, your prayer.

With these words, Pineridge thanks the Governor General for the Speech from the Throne.

Thank you **Madam Speaker**.