REMARKS

Rt. Hon. Hubert A. Ingraham
Prime Minister

Commissioning of the
Upgraded Accident & Emergency Urgent Centre
&
The Operating Theatre & Day Surgical Unit
Rand Memorial Hospital
Freeport, Grand Bahama
18 January 2012
Cabinet Colleagues;

Fellow Parliamentarians;

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health;

Madam Chairman and other Members of the Board of the Public Hospitals Authority;

Managing Director, Public Hospitals Authority;

Heads of Government Agencies;

Executive Management Committee and Staff of the Rand Memorial Hospital;

Representatives from Bruce LaFleur & Associates, Albacore Construction Ltd, and Reef Construction;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we celebrate a significant milestone in the advancement of quality of life for the people of Grand Bahama and the Northern Bahamas including Abaco and Bimini. This milestone is a part of my Government’s plan for social development generally, and for the expansion of quality and accessibility to health care for all Bahamians.

For some time, one of the most pressing healthcare needs for the people of Grand Bahama and the Northern Bahamas was to significantly enhance our second city’s major healthcare facility. Indeed, the
developmental needs of the Northern Bahamas long ago outstripped the aging physical plant of the Rand Memorial Hospital.

During my Government’s second term in Office and while Dr. Ronald Knowles was Minister of Health, we commissioned an extensive review of our national health care facilities including the Rand Memorial Hospital here in Freeport. We received that Report, referred to within the Public Sector as the Dorsette Report, in December, 1999.

The Dorsett Report, which my Government accepted, proposed that the health care facilities at the Rand Memorial Hospital be redeveloped and upgraded over a 7 to 10 year period. We commenced planning toward that end but we were not returned to office in 2002.

Our absence from Government for five years had consequences for Grand Bahama. The recommendations of the Dorsett Report were shelved for 5 years -- notwithstanding that the Minister of Health in the Government which replaced us was a resident of Grand Bahama.

Upon our return to office we took up where we had left off in May 2002. And so what we are commissioning today is a part of what we proposed and planned to do for you some 10 years ago.

These new facilities are critical to our plan to provide the conditions for a healthier Grand Bahama. We were aware that there was
a preference in Grand Bahama for the construction of a completely new hospital.

However, minding our purse and the sound advice proffered in the Dorsette Report, we took into account advantages to be gained from the redevelopment of the present site, notably the continuity of service, and significant savings in capital costs, when compared to a one-time replacement building on a new site.

We accepted also, advice that the Accident and Emergency Department and Out-patient Clinic should be the first stage of redevelopment. This would form a hub for the redevelopment of other Out-patient and Diagnostic and Treatment departments followed by the renovations to the vacated areas which would in turn increase the Paediatrics area and surgical and medical beds.

This new, state-of-the-art facilities comprises approximately 16,720 square feet. They encompass: a modernized, fully-equipped state-of-the-art Accident and Emergency(A&E) Urgent Care Centre; two major theatres and a minor theatre; an endoscopy room and a central sterile supplies department.

The A & E Urgent Care Centre has been expanded from 3900 sq. ft. to 8,200 sq. ft. In essence, it has doubled in size. The new facility will include:

- Trauma Bay to accommodate two (2) critically ill patients;
• Six (6) bedded Treatment Bay with one (1) specially designed to accommodate required isolation;
• Five (5) Examination rooms including one (1) for gynaecological cases;
• Treatment Room;
• Asthma Bay to accommodate four (4) patients;
• Orthopaedic Casting Room;
• Doctors / Nurses Offices;
• Psychiatric Holding Room;
• Staff lounge;
• Waiting Room to accommodate in excess of fifty-five (55) persons;
• Staff and Patient bathrooms including bathrooms specifically designed to accommodate disabled patients;
• Specialized Security Screening Area;
• Special handicap ramps;
• Secured Ambulance Emergency Area; and,

Upgrades have also included enhanced Security Parking for Staff.

The Operating Theatres have been increased in size from a 3,500 sq. ft. one theatre facility to an 8,500 sq. ft. facility including the following:

• Two (2) Class C (515 ft²) Operating Theatres;
• One (1) Class B Minor Procedure/Endoscopy Theatre (300ft²);
• One (1) Induction Room (300ft²);

The facilities cost more than $12 million dollars. This according to our Opponents amounts to neglect of Grand Bahama!
These state-of-the-art facilities along with an internet-enabled connection to the Princess Margaret Hospital for consultation and education purposes will bring the Rand into the 21st century of critical care.

Grand Bahama has demonstrated a need for the recruitment and training of some sixty-nine (69) persons. Already thirty-one (31) persons have been engaged. It is anticipated that over the course of the next four to five weeks, an additional thirty-eight (38) persons will be recruited and trained.

Of the 69 persons, thirty-one (31) persons are slated to be deployed to the Accident & Emergency Urgent Care Centre and Operating Theatre as technicians.

I am assured that the PHA has developed a very comprehensive training program so as to ensure that these persons are appropriately trained and may relieve nurses from routine duties allowing the more highly trained nurses to focus their attention on the special needs of our patients in Accident & Emergency/Operating Theatre.

As is evident from the level and quality of training being given to the participants in the PHA National Jobs Training programme, the PHA are fully disposed to offer permanent employment to trainees who demonstrate their abilities and dedication to work.

There are still more healthcare benefits on the way for Freeport. For example, another of the Dorsette Report recommendations was the
construction of a new community health centre. Such a facility is now on the way. It will provide the full range of primary health care services, including services for mothers and children and for the prevention and control of chronic non-communicable diseases.

These new facilities will enhance the quality of medical services at the Rand. They also represent my Government’s efforts to create jobs and opportunities for talented Grand Bahamian professionals and artisans, allowing them to demonstrate their design, project management and construction skills on specialized infrastructural projects.

Bruce LaFleur and Associates are responsible for the design of the Rand’s operating theatres. They worked closely with Mr. Terrence Cartwright, the Public Hospitals Authority’s lead specialist for this project.

Albacore Construction was engaged as the contractor for the project. I commend both the contracted groups and the PHA’s Capital Development Unit, for the part they have played in the realization of the commissioning we undertake here today.

The Accident and Emergency Department was designed and managed by Mr. Tyrone Burrows of the Capital Development Unit team of the Public Hospitals Authority. I commend Mr. Burrows, the leadership of the Public Hospitals Authority and Grand Bahama Health Services for their collaboration in producing a facility that will serve as a
model as we continue to upgrade and modernize our health care infrastructure throughout The Bahamas.

Reef Construction has earned a reputation for efficiency and building excellence. The Public Hospitals Authority is very pleased to have had their services for this pivotal project.

As intended, this project also provided work for a range of other participants, including plumbers, electricians, roofers and other construction specialists. I am pleased that the phased redevelopment of the Rand Memorial Hospital has generated much needed economic activity and employment and business opportunities throughout the community. Let me assure you, more will come.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

These facilities are a part of my Government’s comprehensive plan for modernizing and expanding tertiary, secondary and primary care facilities throughout The Bahamas.

Central to the process is the redevelopment of the Princess Margaret Hospital at New Providence to function fully as the umbrella referral institution for our health care system.

Ground was broken for the new Critical Care Block at PMH this past November. Estimated at a cost of over $52 million, construction has
begun in earnest. It will be the single largest investment in health care facilities in the country.

When this state-of-the-art facility at Princess Margaret Hospital is completed in June 2013, it will be on par with, and in some instances, surpass major healthcare facilities in the developed world.

Again in New Providence, the Robert Smith Child Health and Adolescent Centre & Special Education Unit, which will be handed over to the Public Hospitals Authority in March of this year by the National Insurance Board is a 35,000 square foot complex. It is being built at a cost of $12 million dollars and is part of a comprehensive upgrade of the Sandilands Rehabilitation Centre in New Providence.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Development of any kind, poses many challenges, especially in a far-flung archipelago such as ours. Not the least of these is the provision of healthcare expertise and infrastructure to meet the needs of communities scattered over thousands of square miles. Throughout our history, it has meant duplicating efforts, facilities and manpower many times over, putting great pressure on national resources.

The availability of readily accessible healthcare and medical resources, especially appropriate first response equipment and skills in the care of trauma, are critical to saving lives. My government’s master
plan for delivering optimal healthcare is for larger islands to serve as a central point for health care services.

It is intended that the healthcare infrastructure in The Bahamas will encompass a community hospital on the most populous islands while providing smaller health centres for satellite islands and cays. The first of these community hospitals will be built in Abaco and Exuma and thereafter in Eleuthera and Long Island.

The community hospitals will provide well-equipped delivery wards for maternity cases as well as male and female in-patient services. This means that Family Islanders in Abaco and Exuma and thereafter other islands, who require hospitalization for non-critical health illnesses, and women who experience uncomplicated pregnancies, will be able to receive the necessary care on their home islands.

These modern, well-equipped facilities will make quality healthcare more accessible and affordable for area residents.

With the Rand as the lead health care centre in the Northern Bahamas the Grand Bahama Health System is a fine example of the organizational structure I just described. Community clinic services are currently provided through seven primary clinics and three satellite clinics on the island of Grand Bahama and surrounding cays.

One of the main clinics is the Eight Mile Rock facility. The others are located at McClean’s Town, Hawksbill, High Rock, West End, and
Sweeting’s Cay in the Grand Bahama and Grand Cay in the Abaco chain of cays. Satellite health care facilities are located at Freetown, Pelican Point, and Waters Cay.

Launched in August 2009, the new clinic on Grand Cay is an example of our new thrust in the provision of health care facilities. The clinic has a modern maternity ward, comfortable examination and treatment rooms, fully equipped dental and X-Ray suites, a two-bed overnight ward, and a pharmacy. It also has resuscitation and stabilization equipment and the services of a qualified midwife.

This pattern is being replicated throughout our Commonwealth. Also in August of 2009, my Government launched upgraded facilities at the Nicholls Town Community Health Centre in North Andros and the Miriam Greene Community Health Centre in Johnson Bay, South Andros.

This year, we have completed construction of Inagua’s new community health centre. It will be officially opened on 3rd February.

I am also pleased to report that the community hospitals planned for Exuma and Abaco are at the tender stage and ground is expected to broken for both in February of this year.

Ladies and Gentlemen:
My government operates on the principle that every Bahamian must have access to quality, accessible and affordable health care. In this regard, the Public Hospitals Authority, is mandated to require specialists attached to the Princess Margaret Hospital to hold clinics in Grand Bahama on a monthly basis. This means that residents of Grand Bahama will not have to travel to Nassau for these essential services. The Public Hospitals Authority has assured me that this new service will begin before the end of June, 2012.

My government is also expanding health care through the National Prescription Drug Plan. The Drug Plan is a two-part initiative that significantly enhances access to life-saving prescription medication for the treatment of non-communicable chronic diseases such as: arthritis, asthma, breast cancer, diabetes, glaucoma, high cholesterol, major depression, hypertension, ischaemic heart disease, prostate cancer and psychosis.

As it is being offered absolutely free-of-charge to the first 11 beneficiary groups, the Drug Plan is reducing patient burden of paying for prescription drugs. It is also improving patient compliance following his or her physician-prescribed treatment regimen.

In essence we are saving lives, extending life-spans, and improving the quality of life.
I am advised that in Grand Bahama, as of January 6th of this year, there are four private pharmacies and nine public facilities supporting the Prescription Drug Plan and 2,061 active beneficiaries. To date, NIB has paid $271,052 to the private pharmacies on their behalf for an average weekly payout of $4,046.

Just as important to achieving our goal of a healthier nation, is the Healthy People Initiative. This second component of the Drug Plan promotes healthy lifestyle choices to lower the incidence of non-communicable diseases, which afflict one in three Bahamians.

Both programmes are exceeding expectations. The National Prescription Drug Plan began in September of 2010 with 6,500 participants. The number of beneficiaries has more than doubled to 16,758 persons in eleven categories. Since the launch of the Plan, nearly 200,000 prescription medications have been dispensed nationwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares: “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one’s family.” First class medical care to promote optimum health is the right of every citizen, a right upheld by my Government.
I pledge to you again today, and to the Bahamian people, that my Government will continue to improve the quality of life and the quality of health care for the Bahamian people.

We will continue to implement our strategic plan for enhanced healthcare for Grand Bahama, and for Bahamians the length and breadth of our Commonwealth.

Even as we commission these facilities, I renew my Government’s solemn vow and enduring commitment to improving health care for all. It is now my privilege to officially commission the Upgraded Accident & Emergency Urgent Centre and the Operating Theatre & Day Surgical Unit at the Rand Memorial Hospital.