

Most Gracious Speech To Both Houses of Parliament



By
His Excellency
The Governor-General

ON WEDNESDAY, THE TWENTY-SEVENTH OF MARCH, 2013

THRONE SPEECH 2013:
Uniting Grenada and Building The New Economy

Delivered to the Houses of Parliament

By

His Excellency Sir Carlyle Glean, Governor-General
On the occasion of the First Session of the Ninth Parliament

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker,

Members of Parliament

Our Nation embarks upon this First Session of the Ninth Parliament in difficult circumstances yet with a heightened sense of opportunity.

The people of this Country have spoken.

In clear and compelling fashion, they voted for jobs, opportunity and the restoration of hope.

My Government accepts this overwhelming mandate with a profound sense of humility and responsibility.

On behalf of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, I congratulate the newly elected and newly appointed members of Parliament. Among this number, 10 are first time members. One member is returning for his seventh consecutive term, a record for the Parliament of Grenada.

I am especially pleased to welcome to the House of Representatives, five female parliamentarians, a record number for the Parliament of Grenada. This is a welcomed development, a

tribute to the capable women of our Country and signals a more inclusive approach to the governance of our beloved Nation.

Speaking of history, I am cognizant that for the second time in Grenada's history, one party has won all the seats in the House of Representatives. I am informed that is a first in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Elected parliamentarians, you have been entrusted with a profound responsibility, a sacred trust, which you must honour and respect at all times. To whom much is given, much is required.

Indeed, you must answer this call to service and you must deliver on your promises.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

My Government commits itself to our time-honoured principles of peace, democracy, human rights, social justice and the rule of law.

With the guidance and help of Almighty God, my Government will be a Government by people, of the people and for the people.

My Government's foremost priorities in this Parliament will be: building a new economy to provide jobs and opportunities for our People; investing in our human resources especially our youth; and uniting our Nation.

The Integrity in Public Life law was enacted in 2007 and came into force on July 01, 2008. Regrettably, almost five years later, the Integrity Commission has not yet commenced operations.

My Government will move swiftly to activate the Integrity Commission. As a first step, all members of my Government will declare their assets, liabilities and income. My Government fully expects all other members of Parliament to follow this example.

To minimize further delays in the functioning of the Integrity Commission, my Government will invite the Commission to consider a phased approach to its operations such that having addressed members of Government and Parliament, it would move to address senior managers in the Public Service; revenue collection agencies and chairmen and members of statutory bodies before addressing other covered persons in the legislation.

My Government recognizes the important role of the media to our democracy and national development. In this regard, my Government is committed to the completion of the media policy and providing support to assist the media in developing its capabilities to execute its important role.

My Government is committed to constitutional reform. Within the first two years of this Administration, the Review Commission will be reconstituted and a referendum will be held. The areas of focus will include Grenada's accession to the Caribbean Court of Justice as Grenada's final appellate court.

The New Economy

The top priority of my Government will be the building of a new economy. Grenada's New Economy must provide jobs for those who wish to work; business opportunities for those who choose to invest; opportunity for wealth creation and prosperity for those prepared to sacrifice and play by the rules; and social justice for all who believe in equality and human rights.

This New Economy is essential to restore the hopes and aspirations of our people especially our youth.

Without jobs, our cherished values are undermined. Our democracy is weakened. Our future is dim.

A job is more than a source of income. It is a path to human dignity and self actualization.

Beyond human dignity, jobs are critical to accomplish a more inclusive and equitable development of this dear land we call home.

Grenada's economic revival requires local and foreign direct investment.

In respect of foreign investors, Grenada wishes to attract clean and credible investors. In that regard, my Government will move swiftly to remove barriers to investment by boosting investor confidence in the management of the economy; further streamlining the investment facilitation process at the Grenada Industrial Development Corporation; and implementing Grenada's Treaty Obligations in respect of the Aliens Landholding License.

Furthermore, Government will soon introduce a Citizenship By Investment Programme. Such programmes have existed for a long time in many developed and developing countries.

My Government will establish a committee to identify best practices for such programmes, review proposals from interested firms and make recommendations to Cabinet. This programme will require new legislation and my Government is committed to bring appropriate legislation to Parliament for this Programme within its first year in office.

Areas of potential investment include: infrastructure such as roads, airports and ports, Agribusiness, Tourism, Energy sector (renewable and non-renewable), ICT and youth development. Key performance metrics will include level of investment in productive sectors and jobs created.

In the immediate future, my Government will seek to reduce unemployment by implementing stimulus programmes for

Agriculture, Construction, Manufacturing, ICT and Financial Services.

In the short term, particular emphasis will be placed on starting long delayed public sector projects such as the Agricultural Feeder Roads Phase II and the long promised House of Parliament.

Special attention will be given to the small and micro-business sector including financing and business support services for entrepreneurs.

The New Economy envisions a world class tourism product.

My Government will facilitate major private sector development projects in the Tourism and Hospitality sector. Furthermore, it will set up Fund for Distressed Hotel Assets to help protect the investment of local entrepreneurs and stem the loss of jobs from the hotel industry.

There will be more targeted and aggressive marketing of our destination in concert with the private sector. Government will also review and rationalize its current airlift arrangements to ensure their cost-effectiveness and optimal impact.

My Government will give due consideration to the issue of casino gambling for visitors only as it considers how it can attract new and modern tourism developments to Grenada thereby providing much needed jobs.

As part of preserving and promoting Grenada's culture, the Grenada Cultural Foundation and the Spice Mas Corporation will be re-oriented to ensure Grenada's culture is nurtured at all levels starting with our schools and that Carnival and other festivals are better organized and promoted both at home and abroad.

Agriculture will have a central place in the New Economy. The key priorities will include food and nutrition security; small enterprise development; market and export development. To that end, several institutions and projects including the Grenada Development Bank and the Market Access and Rural Enterprise Programme will be reviewed and refocused to support this thrust.

In respect of Fisheries, the priorities will be fish quality assurance; conservation of marine resources, security of national fisheries resources and improved governance management. Government envisages a more productive partnership with St. George's University in respect of scientific research and management of marine resources.

Speaking of St. George's University, my Government recognises the significant and positive impact the University has had on the Grenadian life and economy. My Government is committed to pursuing an even deeper and stronger partnership with the University. An enhanced relationship should result in an expansion of scholarships for our citizens especially our youth and increased access to a wide range of specialist health care services. Government will also explore possibilities for the establishment of an International Nursing School giving the global shortage of nurses.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

As part of the economic governance for the New Economy, my Government will soon establish a Growth and Competitiveness Council. This Council will comprise persons from business, academia and Government. The Council will consider issues pertinent to Grenada's growth and competitiveness and provide advice to Government.

The building of a new economy requires strong partnership with the social partners including a harmonious industrial climate. To that end, my Government will soon seek to re-establish the Multi-Partite Committee to engage Labour, Business, Non-governmental Organizations and Government on key socio-economic issues including employment, wages, prices, health insurance, skills and productivity. To that end, my Government is committed to the development of a social pact with its social partners.

In the face of the economic stagnation and decline of recent years, my Government believes that Grenada must confront the reality that it cannot continue to service its public debt on current terms. Consequently, my Government has moved swiftly and decisively to address this important issue. Earlier this month, Government announced its intention to embark on a comprehensive and collaborative restructuring of the Public Debt. This action is essential to help Grenada turnaround her economic fortunes.

The debt restructuring is only one element of a broad economic strategy to put Grenada's fiscal house in order, grow the economy and provide jobs especially for our youth.

It will also allow Government to invest more resources in the people of this country thereby helping to accelerate Grenada's economic revival.

Ultimately, it will help Grenada to meet its obligations to its creditors in a timely and sustainable manner as the economy improves and it will.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, every dollar wasted by Government is one less dollar to meet the pressing needs of vulnerable citizens of this Country. This is a luxury that our Country simply cannot afford. As a consequence, my Government will establish a Waste Reduction Commission comprising a cross section of persons from

the public and private sectors to identify areas of waste in Government and make recommendations for their reduction and elimination. This Commission will be chaired by someone outside of Government and will also be tasked with monitoring the implementation of these recommendations and presenting an annual report to Cabinet. This report will also be tabled in Parliament.

My Government will need the support of development partners, (traditional and non-traditional) to join this effort to revive the Grenadian economy. To that end, my Government has invited key development partners to Grenada to commence a focused dialogue on growth, job creation and fiscal and debt sustainability.

My Government will pursue an enlightened foreign policy with the values and aspirations of the people of Grenada rather than ideology at the centre of this policy thrust.

Grenada will strive to maintain excellent relations with all her neighbours and traditional allies. Mindful of the new global economic realities, Grenada will also extend a hand of friendship and cooperation to non-traditional allies in Latin America, Asia and Africa and elsewhere.

Grenada reaffirms her commitment to the regional integration process including the OECS Economic Union, the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, the University of the West Indies, the Regional Security System and West Indies cricket.

My Government fully understands that small countries cannot go it alone and succeed. Instead, the small states in the Caribbean and around the world must come together if they are to survive and thrive in the harsh global economy. In this respect, my Government

will join with like-minded Governments to revisit the issue of joint and more cost-effective representation in our embassies and overseas missions. Furthermore, these missions will be re-oriented with a thrust to foreign direct investment; trade and new partnerships of bilateral cooperation.

The New Economy will be a Green economy whose key ingredients are economic growth and jobs, social equity and environmental sustainability.

To that end, a green energy policy will be adopted. The current renewable energy and energy efficiency targets will be reviewed and implementation of these targets will be expedited.

Government will lead by example, starting with the Public Service immediately.

Cognisant of Grenada's potential for hydro-carbon development, my Government will move swiftly to implement existing cooperation agreements with private investors. Furthermore, Grenada will pursue cooperation arrangements with Trinidad and Tobago and other countries for joint development and eventual exploration and exploitation.

Government will also pursue negotiations with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and other CARICOM states on boundary delimitations.

Appropriate governance and institutional arrangements will be established to ensure the effective management of this sector and Grenada's overall energy security.

My Government will continue Grenada's role as a leading voice among small states on the burning issue of climate change, adaptation and mitigation.

Grenada, by example, will aggressively pursue green energy targets.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

The potential and fruits of the New Economy will not be realized or harvested if crime and insecurity rises. My Government understands that multi-dimensional solutions are needed to address crime and insecurity. With this in mind, my Government will adopt a holistic view to crime and security that recognizes the social, economic and political causes.

In this regard, my Government is committed to helping create jobs and hope for our youth and completing the Bacolet Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre.

Moreover, my Government will collaborate closely with Grenada's neighbours and law enforcement partners to preserve public safety, protect private property and the rights of citizens and visitors.

Investing in Our People

My Government will give intense and immediate attention to our broken health care system. The priorities will include improved hospital administration, strengthening primary health care systems, enhanced diagnostic services, the provision of basic pharmaceuticals and better end of life care.

My Government is committed to the establishment of a New Health Insurance Scheme and will soon establish a Commission to review options for health care financing and make recommendations to Government.

My Government will give careful consideration to the proposal for a New Hospital as part of the New Economy. Such consideration

will examine the key issue of affordability and improved service delivery.

It will also take into account, how such a New Hospital can best leverage St. George's University and its alumni network as well as create more opportunities for medical professionals locally and in the Grenadian diaspora. The ultimate goal is improved health care and jobs.

The CARICOM Vocational Qualifications will be offered to workers in various fields to assist their readiness for employment opportunities in Grenada and the wider region.

My Government will seek to secure more scholarships for our young people thereby providing them with opportunities to pursue their dreams and make an even more meaningful contribution to national development.

Special emphasis will be placed on training in ICT as it offers great potential for employment creation including self-employment.

The Public Service will be called upon to play an even greater role in economic revival of our Nation.

First, it will be expected to be more caring and responsive. This expectation is consistent with my Government's commitment to be a caring Government always mindful of the needs and cries of our people.

Second, my Government expects the Public Service to operate as a highly professional organization serving the needs of the Country irrespective of the political preferences of individual public officers.

Third, the Public Service will be challenged to play an active role in the solution to reducing waste by doing more with less. Particular

areas of focus will include utilities, fuel, rental of buildings, and international travel.

My Government will also place a strong emphasis on the application of ICT in the Public Service to reduce cost but also improve the speed and quality of service delivery. One such example is the electronic filing and payment of taxes.

My Government intends to be and will be a caring Government. In this regard, macro-economic policy will be re-oriented to place greater emphasis on the most vulnerable groups in our Country including youth, single mothers and the “working poor”. Government will also pay more attention to senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Grenada will work closely with the Governments of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago to secure the best possible outcome for policyholders of British American Insurance and CLICO.

My Government is also committed to assisting the small depositors of Capital Bank in the first year of its term.

My Government is deeply concerned about the number of youth who return home with qualifications yet remain unemployed for extended periods. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources will be mandated to develop and maintain a database of all such persons and efforts will be made to assist them with their job search. As the economy improves in the months ahead, more of these young professionals will secure jobs.

My Government is committed to assisting all citizens to access affordable quality housing. Government will move swiftly to lower the cost of home construction and reduce barriers to home ownership.

The development of our youth is of utmost priority and will find expression in every sector of the economy including Education, ICT, Agriculture, Energy and Construction.

Several special programmes will be implemented including skills training, entrepreneurship and financing.

My Government will promote healthy lifestyles by improving community recreational facilities. Immediate attention will be given to commencing the National Athletics and Football Stadium in the shortest possible time.

My Government is also committed to the building of a mini-stadium at Cuthbert Peters Park in Gouyave, home of Grenada's Olympic champion, Kirani James.

Government will also use major sport facilities to create more sport tourism opportunities.

My Government is committed to helping the people of Carriacou and Petit Martinique realize their full development potential by tapping into their vast heritage and cultural resources. The immediate priorities will include a new port at Harvey Vale and the expansion of the Lauriston Airport.

My Government is committed to a strong partnership with churches and faith-based organizations to support the spiritual and economic revival of our Nation.

To that end, the Ministry responsible for Ecclesiastic Affairs will be provided with resources to partner churches in community development programmes many of which will target our youth.

National Unity

The Holy Scriptures tell us in Psalms 133.1 and I quote *“behold how good and pleasant, it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”*. End of quote.

Uniting the people of Grenada, home and abroad is a top priority for my Government.

In this regard, my Government will establish a Unity Commission comprising churches, other members of civil society and respected citizens to offer suggestions on ways and means to bring our Nation together. This effort is intended to help with the healing and uniting of our Nation following the just concluded election cycle. Furthermore, the Commission will be called upon to promote an environment of inclusiveness thereby harnessing the collective talents and energies of our people, for the development of a more just and prosperous society.

My Government will respect all those who have given service to our Country regardless of political affiliation. Permanent Secretaries have already been instructed to treat all members of the previous Government with respect. No member of the former Government will be harassed or mistreated.

My Government will support policies and programmes that are caring and good for Grenada including any initiated by the former Government and will give credit where credit is due.

Grenada needs all her sons and daughters in this process of economic revival and our journey to sustained growth and prosperity.

Our diaspora will be invited and incentivized to play an important role in building our New Economy from abroad and by returning home.

My Government will strengthen existing mechanisms to engage the diaspora in all areas of national life but especially in the deployment of critical skills and business development.

My Government will respect the right of individuals to privacy and will strongly resist efforts to infringe those rights. In particular, my Government will not encourage or support any attempt to record private conversations and use them against citizens save and except for cases of criminality. Persons who engage in such practices as wiretapping will face and feel the full force of the law.

My Government is committed to delivering on its promises. However, it is recognized that our Country has often lacked the implementation capacity to deliver results. In this regard, deliberate arrangements will be made to ensure timely implementation of Government's policies and projects including the establishment of a Cabinet Subcommittee on the New Economy, the reconstitution of the Investment Facilitation Committee and the reconstitution of the Major Projects Coordination Committee.

Conclusion

Mr President, Mr. Speaker

My Government has set out its major priorities for this Parliament: building a new economy, investing in our people and uniting our Nation. The details for the first year of implementation will be set out when my Government presents its first Budget next month.

When the Prophet Nehemiah started to rebuild the broken down walls of Jerusalem, his beloved city, his burden became lighter and his task was made easier because and I quote “the people had a mind to work” (Nehemiah 4.6, KJV).

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

This is a special time in Grenada's history. This time requires national unity, hard work, discipline and sacrifice. Let us unite to build Grenada, the land we love so dear.

Members of Parliament, citizens and friends of Grenada, I implore you to be guided by the words of our National Anthem, “*ever conscious of God, being proud of our heritage, may we with faith and courage, aspire, build, advance as one people*”.

May God guide you in all your deliberations and make you equal to the sacred trust bestowed upon you.

May God bless Grenada!

