

Fellow Barbadians, I have spent the past week having meetings and informal conversations with a wide cross section of people.

I am truly amazed, pleasantly so, by the positive attitude and optimistic outlook of Barbadians in respect of the forward movement of our country.

Barbadians are for the most part determined to make Barbados work! There is a general understanding of and appreciation for the challenges we confront.

The change in attitude, or should I say adoption of the positive attitude, that we have requested is taking place. I am encouraged by this.

I am fortified also in the knowledge that you have all reported for duty in promotion of the concept of "Team Barbados", and that irrespective of social, economic or political standing,

you are agreed that Barbados must and will emerge from the current global economic crisis perfectly positioned to take advantage of opportunities that will emerge.

It is in this context that I have been reflecting on organizational structures at all levels of public administration. This will be a continuous process.

I have commissioned several studies and solicited the views of knowledgeable persons on how we can make Barbados work better for Barbadians.

Major change is necessary and Government will, of necessity, be a leading agent of that change.

We have started the process of introspection.

The realities of the economic challenges confronting our country demand optimal use of resources: human, financial and

physical.

Monday, March 15th will see the tabling of the annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the next fiscal year commencing April 1st, 2010, followed by a week of debate on matters arising in those estimates.

Various fiscal scenarios and options will be outlined and evaluated on that occasion.

Over the course of the next few weeks we should complete a comprehensive review of the operations of departments of government.

This will entail a refocusing of priorities and reassignments of personnel at all levels, including that of Permanent Secretary.

In the meantime, I have completed a series of individual consultations with Ministers of government and an analysis

of progress in key areas of governmental activity has been undertaken.

While the overall program of government has been hampered and somewhat slowed by limitations to spending, there are some matters that demand urgent and specific attention.

Two weeks ago I spoke to you and addressed the issue of the Barbados Water Authority and our management of scarce water resources.

Persistent drought conditions have rendered this challenge even more acute.

I am happy to report that Executive Chairman Arni Walters is on the job at BWA and the process of revitalization of that institution has intensified.

The day to day functioning of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a second area of

tremendous concern to your government.

Like you, the Minister of Health and indeed my office are inundated with comments, concerns and even complaints relative shortcomings of the institution - even though it is generally agreed that the level of professionalism and patient care is relatively high.

I am satisfied that in addition to the current management structure and coordination by a competent Board of Directors, there is need for more direct political oversight at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

It is too critical an entity in the overall delivery of health services to be left to chance or for its effectiveness to be questioned.

Already the Health portfolio accounts for the largest allocation of the national budget.

Enhancement of QEH will be the largest capital project government would have embarked upon since the building of the Prison.

It is not for me to debate tonight which project should have been given priority in a healthier economy....what I would say, nonetheless, is that under this new administration, the QEH Enhancement project, whether an extensively renovated or completely new structure, is a major undertaking that will commence in this, our first term in office.

In pursuance of this goal, I have decided to re-assign Parliamentary Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister, Senator Irene Sandiford-Garner to the same posting in the Ministry of Health, with specific responsibility for overseeing operations of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as well as conceptualization,

design and details of financing and execution of the QEH Enhancement Project.

Tonight, I wish to confirm the intention of the government to sell its shares in the Barbados National Bank and to commit a substantial portion of the proceeds of this sale towards the QEH Enhancement project.

Arni Walters' absence from the Cabinet has created a void in the key areas of Labour, Immigration and Social Partnership.

I have decided to reassign the Hon. Dr. Esther Byer Suckoo to the Ministry of Labour.

Immigration and Social Partnership are crucial to the successful implementation of our contract of faith, especially at this juncture, where the involvement of the social partners is critical to the success of efforts to grapple with the continuing

economic downturn and its impact on employment and the quality of life of citizens.

Management of the social partnership is a specialty area that I believe require specialist attention and coordination at this time.

In keeping with my policy of accessing and utilizing the best available talent, whether in or outside the elected team of Parliamentarians, I have decided that, while, as Prime Minister, I shall retain ministerial responsibility for both Immigration and Social Partnership, I will recruit from outside of the current Parliament the specialization that is required to oversee the day to day functioning of these critical portfolios.

Accordingly, Trade Unionist and former Executive Director of the Barbados Employers Confederation, Mr. Harry Husbands will be appointed to the

Senate and to the position of Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of Prime Minister, with specific responsibility for Immigration and the Social Partnership.

Senator-Designate Harry Husbands brings a considerable wealth of knowledge and understanding to this assignment and will, I am sure, be very helpful in this period and process.

To assist also in the management of our response to administrative and economic challenges, I have also decided to invite Senator Jepter Ince to assume the position of Parliamentary Secretary in the office of Prime Minister.

The appointments of Senators Husbands and Ince will enable me, as Prime Minister, to assume a greater oversight and coordinating role of other ministries, whose work is crucial to the overall

success of our program.

Furthermore, to assist Dr. Hon. David Estwick in the significant responsibility of tackling the issue of cost of living head on, I have decided to re-assign Hon. Patrick Todd to the portfolio of Minister of State in the Ministry of Economic Empowerment, Trade, Industry and Commerce.

Minister Todd will have specific responsibility for overseeing issues of empowerment, entrepreneurship and small business development.

Fellow Barbadians, an area of particular concern to Government is that of Family, Youth and Sports.

Like you, I am concerned about issues in relation to our youth. This government, in its general election campaign, produced a clear Charter for tackling and resolving issues of concern to young

people.

Irrespective of economic challenges and realities, we are determined to implement our Youth Agenda. We are resolved to promote the concept of family and the values entailed therein.

Sports is an area with considerable potential and which we believe should be fully exploited, especially in periods of adversity.

Accordingly, in giving new impetus to these areas of social concern, I have decided to invite Hon. Stephen Lashley, Member of Parliament for Christ Church West Central, to join the Cabinet of Ministers in the capacity of Minister of Family, Youth and Sports and to spearhead implementation of our family, youth and sports agenda.

Furthermore, as a means of sending correct and consistent messages to society in respect of our appointments to the upper Chamber, the Senate, I have invited Rev. Dr. David Durant and Human Resource Management Consultant, Mr. Andre Worrell, to join our team in the Senate and to bring their perspectives to bear on our deliberations both in the Senate and at meetings of the Government's Parliamentary Group.

Their appointments have created the need for me to otherwise utilize the services of Senators Patricia Inniss and Damien Griffith.

I take this opportunity to thank Senators Inniss and Griffith for their service over the past two years.

Furthermore, as part of efforts to ease the workload of the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, Hon. Ronald Jones, so he can focus more

on the priority issue of discipline among our children - both on and off the school compound, Hon. Christopher Sinckler will become Leader of the House immediately.

Fellow Citizens and Residents, as I intimated at the beginning of this address, the process of review and restructuring of the operations of government will be continuous.

The changes I have outlined this evening are but a further step along the road of necessary adjustment. There will be more, I am sure.

In the interim, I want to end where I started by acknowledging the positive attitude and disposition of a wide cross section of society to the challenges we confront.

I sense a resolve, indeed a

determination on the part of many to play their part as members of **Team Barbados** in making **Project Barbados** work.

I thank you for this!

Some say I am an optimist. Indeed I am!

I am encouraged and strengthened by the resilience of our people and by their determination to propel Barbados through this period of strain. It has not been easy...it will not be easy...but, with our collective will and participation, it will be achieved!