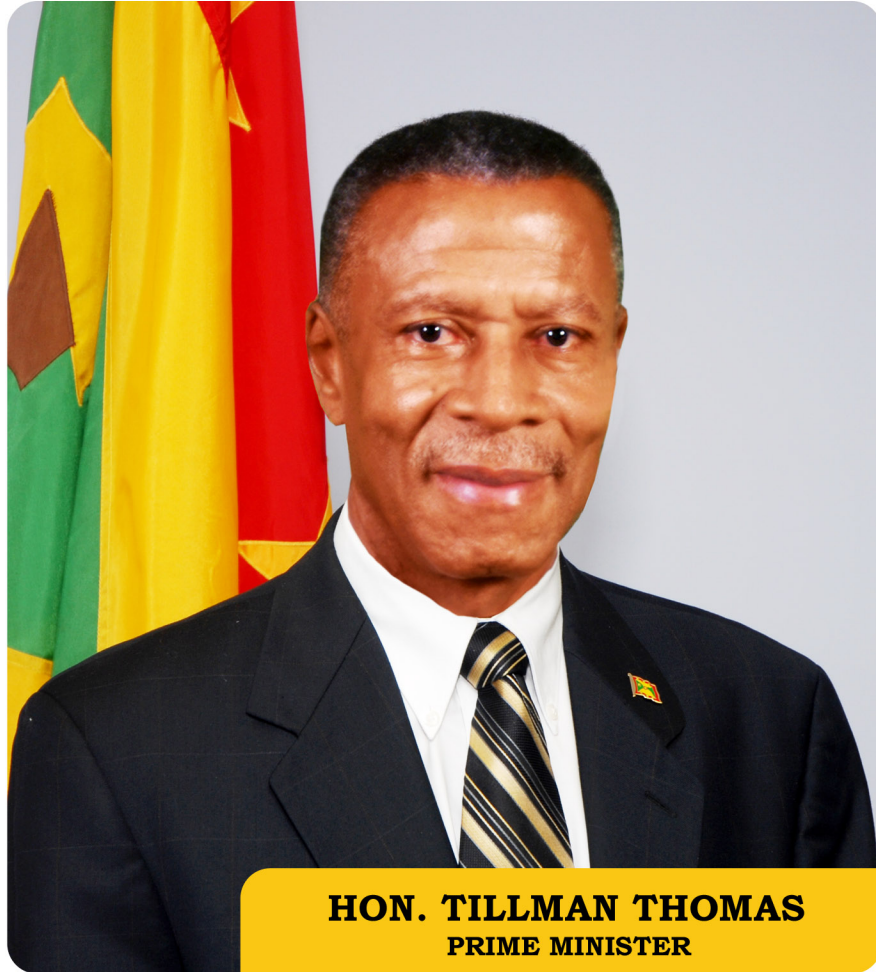




GRENADA



Address to the Nation

Thursday, July 30th, 2009



ADDRESS TO THE NATION **by Prime Minister Tillman Thomas**

Fellow citizens, in fulfillment of my duty to you, as Prime Minister, I wish to address you this evening on important national matters. We have just completed our first year in office with considerable success despite the many challenges.

During the period, I have had the opportunity to make many observations. Most importantly, I have been listening to your comments, your demands and your evaluation of our Government's performance to date. What is quite clear, is that qualitative improvements in our governance and management are necessary and urgent if we are to continue to achieve the objectives that we set ourselves for the sustainable growth and development of our country.

Fellow Grenadians,

The responsibility which you have placed on me demands that I do two highly important things:

- Inspire and Lead our Nation.
- Manage effectively the affairs of Government

Leading our Nation effectively requires a number of important qualities and values, among which are the following:

- Having a clear Vision of where we need to go as a nation
- Exhibiting Strong values and principles necessary to underpin our work
- Demonstrating Respect for the honour and dignity of our Nation
- Touching lives and inspiring our people
- Forging Unity and practicing inclusion as Grenada belongs to every one of us

- Ensuring Accountability and fairness
- And most importantly maintaining our abiding faith in Almighty God.

I am aware that you expect me to be an effective and successful leader. I am also equally clear that your desire is for a government that you would be proud of.

A government, that will serve in the interest of all Grenadians.

I say to you tonight, that I fully understand your expectations, and that you have the assurance that our Nation will be properly led for as long as I have your mandate.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now turn to the management of government. The successful performance of any government among other things requires the establishment of proper systems and the deployment of the appropriate teams and persons to support the formulating and execution of public policy.

All Decisions related to critical issues such as employment, investment, resource allocation, social welfare and national security should be focused on promoting the public good for the benefit of all Grenadians.

Under the Constitution of Grenada, the administrative structure for the operations of government is laid out in clear details. Principally, it consists of a Cabinet of Ministers and a Public Service headed by Permanent Secretaries. The latter supervise the departments while the Ministers are responsible for general direction and control.

Having had the opportunity to evaluate this basic model over the past twelve months, I am convinced that there is a need to introduce innovative systems and new approaches to management if we are to achieve our objectives. Failure to do so, would leave intact pronounced deficiencies thereby compromising policy-making and effective implementation.

Accordingly, I will be making some managerial changes which are designed to improve efficiency, effectiveness and at the same time allow for better representation.

Under the Constitution, ministers are vested with the power of policy direction and control over departments of government. This means that ministers are a critical component of the administrative system at the leadership level. It also means that the quality of that leadership is a major determinant of success for the Government.

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This has enabled me to decide on adjustments which seem to me to be prudent, necessary and beneficial.

Fellow Citizens

OUR DUTY IS TO SERVE THE PEOPLE.

OUR TASK IS TO BUILD GRENADA

The power of ministerial office is not a personal power. It is a power to do good for all the people. It requires focus, discipline, humility, reasonableness and fairness.

In making the following changes, I am confident that the ministers affected will approach their new assignments with a continued sense of purpose, a willingness to learn, a commitment to teamwork and an unshakeable determination to serve the people.

Ladies and gentlemen, you would recall that one of our priority agenda commitments was to engage the Canadian authorities with the objective of seeking the removal of the visa Restriction for Grenadians traveling to Canada. We have been doing so.

The Canadian government has described the steps already taken by our government as “progressive”, pointing out that “members of the new government have always condemned the economic citizenship programme.” and that Grenadians are not considered a security risk.

The problem now is that, there must be a reduction in the number of Grenadians who travel to Canada on a visitor’s visa and remain illegally in Canada after the visitors visa has expired. Additionally, the government in Ottawa also wants a reduction in the number of Grenadians seeking political asylum in Canada.

Based on the criteria for seeking asylum, there is virtually no reason why any Grenadian should qualify for such. It appears that many Grenadians are ill advised as to the requirements for political asylum.

Importantly, statistics supplied to us show that in the years 2006, 2007 and 2008, 35%, 31% and 46% of Grenadians who traveled to Canada on a visitors visa in the respective years, did not return to Grenada after their time had expired.

The Canadian officials see this as alarming and indicate that this rate should be reduced significantly before any consideration could be given to a waiver of the VISA requirement. This will depend to a large extent on the actions of all our citizens.

As a consequence, I wish to advise and urge that all who are desirous of working and living in Canada to follow the legal requirements as determined by Canada, beginning with a formal application.

I further recommend that all Grenadians should advise their family, friends and relatives of this situation and what is now required.

This matter is of utmost importance and we will continue to pursue it.

I wish to take this opportunity to once again thank the people of Grenada for their confidence reposed in the National Democratic Congress.

I wish to thank you also for your patience and understanding as we seek to build our country in the difficult circumstances which are affecting everyone.

Every reasonable Grenadian knows that the current pressures were not introduced by, nor are they the results of policies, actions or decisions taken by my Government.

However, the challenge is at hand and we must look forward and forge ahead. In doing so we must remember that while some of us are able to cope, there is a significant segment of our population who cannot. We have a collective responsibility in these circumstances to provide support so that they too can survive.

We will do our best, but everyone must know that this is not a period of plenty. We must make the best use of the little we have.

Over the next four years, we will be making Grenada a more prosperous place, a country of integrity and hope for all its citizens.

I call upon every proud and patriotic Grenadian to join hands, share strengths and commit their talents in working together for a BETTER GRENADA.

I thank you most sincerely.

May God Bless Our Nation

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