The GIS Review

Achievements of First 100 Days in Office

China commits millions in grant aid to Grenada

Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell returned from Trinidad where he received commitment from China that twenty million EC dollars in grant assistance will be made available to Grenada.

The decision was made during bilateral discussions with President of the Peoples Republic of China Xi Jinping in Trinidad.

Prime Minister Mitchell, on his return, told members of the media, in a news conference at the Maurice Bishop International Airport, that Grenada has started the paper work to receive the money from China.

He said, Grenada is pleased with the advances China has made, but has asked the Chinese President to treat Grenada as a special case.

"We asked him for a further ten million US dollars of grant aid for the next three years because our view is that, given the kind of policies and programmes we are going to put in place, we expect the toughest period for us will be the next two to two and a half years, and therefore we wanted special consideration at this time," Prime Minister Mitchell noted.

Dr. Mitchell said, the Chinese President also announced that 3 billion US dollars in aid will be made available to the Caribbean.

1.5 billion will be used for infrastructural projects, and the remaining 1.5 will be used for further development in areas like tourism, education and health care.

He said, all this is being done even as China experiences its own challenges.

“For them to make that kind of sacrifice, it demonstrates to me that they are showing themselves to be a true friend of the Caribbean region, and I think that all the leaders showed appreciation in their response to the President,” Prime Minister said.

Payment of New Salaries

The Government of Grenada announced, at the end of May, that public servants are now receiving new salaries.

These new salaries are consistent with Agreements reached between Government and several trade unions in the country. The Government and the unions are continuing their discussions about the schedule for the payment of retroactive pay for the same period.

The Government is pleased that five (5) years after their last salary increases, Public Servants and Prison Officers are now enjoying new salaries.
Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, *The GIS Review.*

In this first edition we will focus on the achievements of the new administration during its first 100 days in office.

Hereafter, a new edition of *The GIS Review* will be circulated every two weeks via electronic format on our website, facebook page and email. Through this method the publication will be available to you wherever you are.

Several hard copies will also be printed for circulation.

The newsletter will serve as another way to showcase and provide information on the ongoing achievements of the government. We see our role in GIS as a critical one in promoting the work of the government and informing you about what government is doing.

News and updates about GIS itself will also be shared with you via our newsletter. We plan to update you on the roll out of our new corporate plan which is currently unfolding.

With the reintroduction of print release dissemination and documentary production, we were delighted to present our documentary, “Legacy of a Friend”, to the Venezuelan president. Other plans include; the launching of our new glitzy website, live streaming of our television channel and our facebook page has been created and has become quite popular with text and television packages.

There is a clear emphasis on new media in our latest corporate initiatives and we feel this is consistent with our Prime Minister’s passion for the use of technology for national and personal elevation.

We also feel it is consistent with government’s policy to focus on youth development since today’s youth are quite savvy and have a very active participative presence online.

We are happy to make a copy of our newsletter available to you.

**Senator Winston Garraway**  
Minister of State with responsibility for Information

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**Flood Project to give St. Mark Economic Boost**

The recent Sod-Turning Ceremony for the St Mark’s Flood Mitigation Project has been hailed as a security and economic lift for the parish.

The US 5 million dollar project, expected to last for a year, will also provide much-needed jobs for scores of residents of St Mark.

It was a happy and uplifting occasion for Parliamentary Representative for the area the Hon. Clarice Modeste Curwen.

Several top government officials, including Prime Minister the Hon. Dr. Keith Mitchell, Works Minister the Hon. Gregory Bowen and Minister of State in the Ministry of Communications and Works, Physical Development, Public Utilities and ICT, the Hon. Alvin Dabreo, were among those at the launch.

The Parliamentary Representative described the occasion as a great moment, which will help to uplift the standard of the community.

She was elated because the project, which provides jobs for the community, seeks to secure the St Mark’s River, which has reaped destruction over the years with the fall of heavy rains.

“Some people call it the ‘Great River’ but we do know that it is a sleeping giant, which sometimes wakes up and creates havoc; so we are extremely grateful for this disaster mitigation measure that is being launched at this time,” Mrs. Modeste Curwen told the gathering.

The St Mark’s Mitigation Project will help tackle the unemployment situation in the parish.

“I am also especially grateful, because it will create jobs, jobs in capital letters. This is what we have all waited for and this is what we promised. I am proud to be part of a government that delivers,” the Minister declared.

“If for every Chinese, you have one Grenadian working that is very good, or if for every Chinese you have two or three Grenadians, that is priceless.”

The project involves the watercourse dredging, slope protection and reconstruction, flood mitigation structure construction and waterfront and road sub grade repairs.
Ten Youth Programmes Launched

Ten Youth Programmes including the New Imani Programme, have been officially launched with a promise of bringing hope and opportunities to the young people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. The long awaited launch of the programmes was held at the new Grenville Bus Terminus on Saturday.

Upon assuming office, Government was concerned about the level of poverty, unemployment and problems faced by the Nation’s youth. It’s for these reasons, and more, an allocation of over 24 million was assigned to Youth Development Programmes in the 2013 Budget to be initiated by the Ministry in charge of Youth Affairs.

The programmes launched are;
- The Youth Pulse Programme; the promotion of healthy lifestyles, positive values and attitudes.
- The Positive Vibes Programme; a platform to promote the cultural creativity of young people.
- Model Youth Development Centre Programme; youth centres will be opened across the country and will be used to offer programmes for training.
- The Youth Hotline Programme; a 24 hour service where young people can call, toll free and have access to qualified counselors.
- There will be a return of the Youth Ambassador and the Youth Parliament Programmes among others.
- Then there is the New Imani, which is also inclusive of the Youth Enterprise Programme, which is divided into three levels.

Jobs for the Jobless
Renewed CCC Contract will provide hundreds of jobs

After almost four years in the wilderness, hundreds of Grenadians will find employment with Caribbean Consolidate Contracted (CCC) Limited, which resumed work in April.

The New National Party Government of Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell, promised to quickly reinstate the construction company, during the recent General Elections campaign; and a little more than a month in office, the promise is being fulfilled.

Minister of Communications and Works, Physical Development, Public Utilities and ICT, the Hon. Gregory Bowen, made the announcement at a Press Conference last week at the Ministerial Complex.

The Kuwaiti Fund suspended disbursement to Grenada last February, after the Tillman Thomas NDC Government failed to make overdue payments on four loans. Bowen said, that the government has entered into a new agreement with the Kuwaiti Fund, which allows CCC to resume operations April 2013.

Bowen pointed out, that under the new agreement, Government will make a one million dollar payment to the Fund and a schedule of payments to wipe out the EC$ 11 million in arrears will be created.

The Works Minister also told the press, that Government has also agreed on a schedule to pay Caribbean Consolidate Contracted (CCC) Limited of half-a million dollars a month, and that he was happy they were resuming operations, without a total pay-off to CCC.

Government owes CCC approximately 100,000 Kuwaiti Dinas the equivalent of EC$1 million. “Once we make that down payment, the Fund will immediately reinstate us and all operations in Grenada will be returned to normal,” Bowen told Journalists.

Projects coming on stream include the construction of 10 roads in places like Mt Pleasant, three in St Andrew, Laura Estate in St David as well as St Mark and St Patrick.

Minister of State in the Ministry of Works Alvin DaBreo is elated with the new development describing it as very important and timely to the enhancement of the transportation infrastructure and improved access to Agricultural lands. He added that Agricultural produce will effectively get to markets around the country.
Government moves to quickly deliver Chinese Houses

Minister of Social Development, Housing and Community Development, Hon. Delma Thomas said that her ministry is moving quickly to deliver the three-hundred and fifty-one (351) Chinese built houses to the Grenadian public.

The houses, which were handed over by the Chinese Government last year to the NDC Administration, could not be released to owners because they were not fitted with electricity and sewage amenities.

The Sewage System alone costs EC 1 million dollars.

The Housing Minister said the issues are being addressed so that the much-needed houses can be delivered, there are still a few hurdles to be crossed, however.

“I met with the former Chinese Ambassador, who gave me the assurance that they will see how they can assist,” Minister Thomas said.

The Housing Minister also said that she would continue to conduct follow ups with the new Chinese Ambassador to discover what sort of assistance can be obtained.

Thomas is keen to have the houses outfitted with electricity and sewage amenities in the quickest possible time so that they can be distributed.

She announced that the Peoples Republic of China, has assured her that they are going to build a second phase of houses for the people of Grenada, who were affected by the passage of Hurricane Ivan – the 2004 hurricane destroyed 29,000 of the country’s 39,000 households.

The Housing Minister insists, however, that her primary concern at this time is the distribution of the 351 homes.

Thomas, who is also responsible for Social Development has also been on the move visiting homes for the elderly in St David, St George, St Patrick and St Mark to get a first hand view of the situation facing the elderly, children and workers.

The minister later said that she has discovered that a lot of people, who were placed in the homes with public assistance, have had their support withdrawn.

She said that urgent attention is needed since some are ill with diabetes, high blood pressure and other ailments.

“I am not advocating giving everyone public assistance right across the board. I believe we have to do it on a case to case basis; so that the those who need care get it. I believe government has the right to provide them with medication”, the minister said.

She is hoping to visit the other homes in the coming week, in an attempt to enhance their operations.
Major Boost for Sporting Infrastructure

The enhancement of the Nation’s Sporting Infrastructure is among the projects being undertaken in the 2013 Budget. Prime Minister and Finance Minister, the Hon. Dr. Keith Mitchell, said that the Nation’s top sporting facilities will get its fair share of the over EC 1 billion dollar budget that was announced in parliament.

Dr. Mitchell also said that plans are in train for the rebuilding of the National Athletic and Football Stadium, the construction of the Kirani James Mini Stadium in St. John, and the lighting of more facilities for night activities.

“This year the top priority is the rebuilding of the National Athletics and Football Stadium”, he said, noting the Peoples’ Republic of China has earmarked EC 85 million dollars for the project.

The Prime Minister also announced, that the plans are being advanced for construction of the Kirani James Mini Stadium at Cuthbert Peters Park in Gouyave.

“Through a Bolt arrangement, work will start on the first phase of the Cuthbert Peters Park in St John, which would be transformed and named the Kirani James Mini Stadium,” Dr. Mitchell said.

He also announced, that the lighting of major playing fields will continue, in an attempt to develop high performance athletes and provide more playing hours for the country’s sportsmen and women.

“Very soon, work will start on the lighting of the Lasagesse Playing Field in St. Davids,” Dr. Mitchell said. He also added that mass participation is needed.

“In conjunction with Sporting Associations and Parish Sports Councils, the Ministry will launch a Community Sports Program aimed at encouraging mass participation by all our people in sports, and bringing sports to the villages and communities.”

Tyrell Bay Marina Project Moves Forward

Project is expected to provide over 400 jobs

The Gov. of Grenada is giving their full support for the development of a world-class full service marina resort in Carriacou in their quest to build a new economy in the twin isle parish.

Prime Minister, Dr. The Right Hon. Keith Mitchell, along with other government ministers was on hand to witness the re-launching ceremony of the Tyrell Bay Marina.

The marina project, which was originally launched in 2004 by principal developers Jerome McQuilkin and John Walker, only saw the reclamation of land fulfilled.

Mr. McQuilkin, a Grenadian native, said this was so due to the previous NDC Administration’s non-approval of their request to attain an additional 7 ½ acres of land. He said he viewed their action as political victimization.

The developers are now ready to move forward with the construction phase which Mr. McQuilkin said would see the establishment of Carriacou as a year round alternative destination and the creation of local investment in the charter business – among other benefits.

Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Mitchell, noted that with Grenada being an excellent sailing destination, the contribution by developers like McQuilkin and Walker should be applauded.

Also, with the yachting sector creating an environment which encourages investment and income, PM Mitchell further added that the sector is significant to the growth of the local economy.

Work on the project is expected to commence soon and once fully operational the Tyrell Bay Marina is hoping to provide 125 direct jobs and 300 indirect jobs.
Commencement of Tax E-Filing Training

The Inland Revenue Division (IRD) of the Ministry of Finance, in continuing with its implementation activities for the launch of E-taxation services, commenced its Business Education component in June.

The training session was geared at exposing the participants to the Online (Front End) System by providing practical demonstrations of the various functions of the System. Participants are also being briefed on what can be expected in their interactions with the IRD.

The training was facilitated by Ms. Asta Dagiene of the Norway Registers Development AS (NRD), the firm contracted to develop the Front End System for the Windward Islands. Declaring the training session open was the Minister of State, responsible for ICT in the Ministry of Communications, Works and ICT, Minister Alvin Da Breo.

Minister Da Breo lauded the Ministry of Finance, in particular the IRD, for this bold initiative, at a time when Government has identified ICT as one of the driving forces of the New Economy.

He stated that he is particularly pleased that tax services would now be readily available for persons in the Diaspora, who in the past, were dependent on relatives and friends to conduct transactions for them.

He praised the businesses present for taking the time to learn the operations of this new system.

Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Mike Sylvester, encouraged the businesses present to embrace the system and make the best use of it. He further told them that this tax system is expected to create a favourable tax environment which will undoubtedly redound into increased benefits for all parties.

Comptroller of the IRD, Ms. Pauline Peters, highlighted some of the benefits of the new system including easier access to filing and paying of taxes with 24 hour service. She reiterated the importance of this training for ensuring a smooth implementation process.

E-taxation services are scheduled to be launched in July 2013.

Government applauded on 100 days achievements

Two local businessmen have praised the new Keith Mitchell government for its performance during the first 100 days in office.

Manager of PKF Accountants, Mr. Henry Joseph and Private Sector representative in the Upper House, Sen. Christopher De Allie.

The efforts of the Administration were outlined during an address to the nation by Prime Minister Mitchell on the 12th of June, 2013 – 100 days after taking office.

"What he indicated in my view was to say look, we are trying, we are hoping that by July 1 there are going to be some jobs created," said Joseph.

"We as Grenadians have to be optimistic. We have to take the view that we understand the difficulties, but we are giving you the benefit of the doubt because you are assuring us that things are going to happen, and we believe that they will, so we just have to wait and see".

Looking back on the achievements thus far, Manager of Sissons Paints and Private Sector Representative in the Upper House, Sen. De Allie said, government has performed well.

"I think we can commend the government for getting a few projects off the ground ...example the start of the CCC project, the start of the St Mark’s Flood Mitigation Project and if the intention here as I believe it is to generate employment, that we know is so badly needed in the rural side of the economy we have to commend them for getting those projects going," said Senator De Allie.

“We have always said (in) the private sector that a major concern is the unemployment issue and if we could get the rural side of the economy activated by employing people then we can see some movement in the economy in general because there would be more spending”.

Both Mr. Joseph and De Allie hope that the projects and jobs created would be sustainable.

Mr. Joseph believes it’s important for sectors such as Tourism and Youth development while Mr. De Allie says here should be a focus on construction.

“The construction sector is one of the sectors that you could get short term activities to happen,” said the Senator.

“So the quicker you can get things to happen, the better it is for the economy, because from a short term basis you would want to exercise caution in that some of the projects we do you would have some sought of sustainability, so it’s not just to build a road, but to get into projects that would continue to sustain productive employment”.

He believes people’s confidence will grow when they see things happening and that would translate into people spending and the economy reviving and getting to where it’s expected to be.
Prime Minister visits Bus Terminus

“Prime Minister, thank you for visiting us. No one has bothered to do so in years.” “Please do something about the rent for the booths;” “There are leaks in the building, and water seeps through when it rains…”

These were some of the complaints echoed by vendors at the St. George’s Bus Terminal and Fish Market when Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Mitchell, paid an impromptu visit to the facilities.

According to the Prime Minister, he “had heard many complaints about the situation with the vendors and so [he] wanted to pay them a visit to hear those himself, and to actually see what is happening at the facilities.”

Many vendors thanked him for the visit, and expressed pleasure that he took the time to see their situation firsthand so that the Government can make an informed policy decision.

Among the complaints was, what many vendors considered, the “high” rent for the booths. The workers explained that they were unable to make a reasonable profit at the end of the month especially in this period of economic stagnation. Other complaints, though on a lesser scale, were sightings of water leakages in the facilities, as well as vendors wanting to be responsible for their own utilities.

The Prime Minister pledged to take all their concerns into consideration, and to speak with the relevant authorities, which he was able to do shortly after speaking to the vendors and passers-by.

In an impromptu meeting with officials from the Port Authority, Prime Minister Mitchell shared the issues raised by the vendors, and suggested possible solutions to those problems. He promised to work with Port Authority to address those as soon as possible, within the context of the economic realities.

Editorial

The new administration of Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Keith Mitchell has been commended by many for hitting the ground running in tough economic times since the February elections.

The administration has made it quite clear that one of the first orders of business is to embark on a rigorous programme to tackle the high unemployment in the country, which it sees as a precursor to improving the economy.

Evidence has unfolded in the first one hundred days in office that has confirmed the new government’s intention.

A number of construction projects have rolled off the shelf in record time that point favourably in this direction.

They include the CCC feeder road construction programme, the Victoria Flood Mitigation Project, the Tyrell Bay Marina Expansion Project, as well as the launch of the new Imani Programme with ten new programmes aimed at youth development.

The new government is clearly sending a message that despite the challenges we are facing as a country, it intends to press ahead with measures to turn things around.

Construction, which suffered a major hit when the global meltdown occurred, and the hike in the cost of sand, is being targeted by the government.

A five percent drop on a number of construction items is now in effect and would play a role in these new efforts at rebuilding our economy.

Other new projects on the horizon include the construction of the Governor General’s residence, the building of new police and prison facilities, expansion of the Lauriston Airport, the renovation of the Maurice Bishop International Airport and the much talked about new parliament building.

The construction of the new parliament building will commence in earnest before the end of this year, for the counterpart funding which was needed to unlock the grant funding has only been secured recently by the Foreign Affairs and International Business Minister, Nicholas Steele.

Since the new administration of Prime Minister Mitchell came to office, payments have begun to organisations which include University of the West Indies, Caribbean Development Bank, the Regional Security System, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Kuwait Fund, the World Bank, the OECS pharmaceutical procurement Services, the Caribbean Consolidated Contractors and the OECS secretariat to name a few.

This action has now put Grenada back in good standing with these organisations and has cleared the way toward opportunities for our country and people.

A number of new programmes are being prepared for roll out as well, including the Citizenship by Investment Programme.

Also, the government received high praise from the Trade Unions for not only paying Public Workers on time but being able to pay the salary increases which were outstanding for over four years.

All agree that the task ahead is a challenging one for our country but Prime Minister Mitchell has said consistently that he is prepared to make the necessary sacrifice and has asked the same of our nation.

It is clear that the strides made by the new administration have been significant within the first one hundred days.

And many including the World Bank, the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, and several leading members of the community and business sector have praised the government for blazing the trail.

Based on the urgency required to fix the economy and the enthusiasm being demonstrated we can safely expect more roll outs of nation building policies and programmes.
Almost eight years after conceiving the vision of connecting the Caribbean through Information Communication Technology (ICT) using Broad Band Technology, the dream of Prime Minister Dr Keith Mitchell, is a reality.

The Caribbean Knowledge Learning Network (CKLN) was launched three weeks ago in Port of Spain, seeking to empower the people of the region.

Dr. Mitchell, who in 2005, was the CARICOM Minister responsible for ICT wanted to push the Caribbean forward by empowering nationals through education.

Work on the Broadband Fibre Optic Network, which began in 2011, connecting Grenada to Colleges and Universities across the region and around the globe was completed recently with a grant from the European Union, is now ready to take off.

The launch recently in Port of Spain was a riveting moment for Physicist and ICT Specialist Ken Sylvester, who told the Government Information Service (GIS) that Grenada and the region now has the tool to empower its people to become more competitive globally.

Sylvester says the CKLN, which is headquartered at the Villa in St George’s allows more Grenadians greater access to tertiary education at significantly reduced costs and also provides greater prospects for Tertiary Institutions to expand joint degree programs to develop more collaborative, joint distance programs such as the diploma program being conducted between Shortwood Teachers College of Jamaica and the TA Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) of Grenada.

“You can stay in Grenada and do a Computer Science Degree, a degree in Mathematics or a course of your choice from any college or university in the Caribbean or anywhere in the world.

That happened because of the Tenacity and vision of Prime Minister Dr Keith Mitchell, who still has the portfolio for ICT in CARICOM”, he remarked, noting that Dr Mitchell is excited and wants the Nation to know that there is this utility that will give nationals easy access to Tertiary Education.

“It has three objectives- one to reduce the cost of delivering Tertiary Education, providing more opportunities for Grenadians to access higher education and delivering quality programs, which must be the same level with international standards because it is a global village.

Any Grenadian doing a degree here should be able to compete with one offered in New York or London.

The degree should be relevant “, Sylvester told the GIS.