The New National Party Government of Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell has declared war on unemployment with hundreds of jobs coming on stream and a major offensive underway, which is expected to spur economic growth and development.

Dr. Mitchell says, that at least 10,000 people could find employment, on a temporary basis, with several government driven initiatives on stream, as the election promise to provide jobs is delivered.

Despite the tough economic situation, government has embarked on a number of projects that are resulting in thousands finding temporary jobs.

They include the De-bushing Program, which began on July 1, 2013, employing 445 gangs of seven around the country.

There is also the Farm Subsidy Program, which employs between 1,600 - 2,000 workers, and the Concrete Road Program, which will also provide employment for many, as the government seeks to energize the economy.

In his first official press conference, five months after being overwhelmingly returned to office in February, Prime Minister Mitchell reiterated government's commitment to the empowerment of people.

"The workforce is about 40,000, so if we have now 3,500 persons working for the two months and you add another 3,000 who may be there for another two years, and another 1,500 with the Concrete Road Project and Special Projects, it will take the number to 8,000 workers", Dr. Mitchell said.

He also spoke about other jobs coming on stream with the construction of the House of Parliament, expected to start soon, the St. Mark’s Mitigation Project, two manufacturing projects underway in Frequenthe and the Sandals Hotel Project, which is already providing employment for many.

"We’re not even talking those. We are looking at around 8,000 from government initiatives alone; so you could be talking about 10,000 persons, who will be off the unemployment line".

"We are going to see a serious dent to the employment at least temporarily in the country", an upbeat Prime Minister Mitchell told the press.

The Grenadian leader is also upbeat about new jobs in the Private Sector, as the New Economy takes shape.

He spoke about some 200 young people who have been trained for the Cruise Tourism Industry by a family in New Hampshire, who have done a wonderful job.

"The Cruise Line people are so impressed with them. They seem to be extremely successful with almost everyone they train finding employment".
Minister’s Welcome

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter, The GIS Review.

In this edition we are focusing on the Government’s first anniversary in office.

One year ago the New National Party was voted overwhelmingly into office, winning all fifteen available seats. The people had the confidence that Dr. Keith Mitchell and his NNP had the best plan to restore fiscal management and economic development in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Revising the inherited sluggish economy has been no easy task. It certainly calls for the collective effort of all citizens.

Your Government hit the ground running, garnering all available sources and partners to salvage what was possible, and to seek new avenues for resources. To get the economy moving again called for some bold, and sometimes unpopular, decisions. Painful as they may be, they have been absolutely necessary, given our economic realities.

One year later, where are we as a country? Are we closer to seeing light at the end of the tunnel?

The Government has introduced a three year Homegrown Structural Adjustment programme, facilitated by the IMF, in order to address the poor economic situation and to narrow the fiscal gap—which now stands at EC $15 million monthly. Additionally, 70% of the total revenue Government collects goes toward paying salaries, wages and pensions; while the other 30% goes toward paying debts—a most untenable position.

Understanding that economic recovery will require collective responsibility and effort, Government has been working with the committee of Social Partners to find the best solutions to our problems.

Sisters and Brothers all, the road ahead to economic recovery will be long and arduous, but I am confident that we will all reap the benefits. We have been in tough battles before and have overcome. Our resilience will take us through yet another challenge because our children’s future is at stake, and it requires shared will, sacrifice, and enduring strength and optimism.

In closing, let us find solace in the passage found in the book of Psalms 121: 1-2 “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. 2 My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.”

My friends, we know from Whom our help comes, and we will continue to seek his guidance. May God bless you, and this beautiful nation that we are happy to call home.

Senator Winston Garraway
Minister of State with responsibility for Information

Unemployment falls 7% in less than a year

The Grenada Government has delivered on its promise of creating jobs for its citizens.

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Dr. the Right Hon. Keith Mitchell, laid out the facts about this at the presentation of the 2014 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

The 2014 budget was filled with projections and plans by the government to put people back to work and place food on their tables.

During the year, a number of projects were rolled out that created some much needed jobs, mostly in the field of construction - which showed the largest growth in 2013.

Under the Sandals La Source construction project, one thousand five hundred people found employment; private home construction; one thousand five hundred; feeder roads project, one hundred and fifty; concrete roads, two hundred; NIS Complex Project, forty; and the new Imani programme, two thousand.

This brings the total number of people finding employment since government assumed office in March to 4,390.

This number however, does not include the debushing and some other short term employment opportunities created by government.

“Since 14,000 persons out of a labour force of 60,000 have now found jobs, this means that the unemployment level has fallen by 6.7% this year,” Prime Minister Mitchell said.

“Furthermore, since the Labour Force Survey has established that the rate of unemployment is now 33.5 percent, the Survey also proves that the unemployment rate was at least 40.2 percent before we assumed office.

Employment has risen. Unemployment has fallen. We have begun to deliver on our promise of jobs, jobs, jobs.”

Even with such a major impact on the country’s unemployment rate, which stands at 33.5 percent according to a labour force survey in September this year, Dr. Mitchell believes it is still unacceptably high and must be reduced.

$350,000 for Farm Labour Support

The Farm Labour Support Programme, another one of government’s ploys to provide employment, will give some 1,500 farmers an opportunity to benefit from farming exercises, and is also designed to boost local food production.

Government has pumped EC$350,000 dollars into the Farm Labour Support Program, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Senator Simon Stiell, disclosed during a sitting of the Senate.

Senator Stiell made it clear, that they are not selling off or privatizing the estates; but are partnering with the Private Sector in an attempt to bring the estates back to life.

“We have budgeted EC$350,000 for this program, which also includes Carriacou,” Senator Stiell said.

He indicated, that there will be nine teams, each consisting of 10 workers, who will be employed fortnightly.

The venture, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, is providing temporary employment for four hundred and fifty (450) workers.

Senator Stiell said, that the program will be closely and carefully monitored to ensure that it is efficiently executed, indicating that there will be significant efficiencies in the past.

“ Lands were cleared but never planted. We will be monitoring this to ensure that we get the best value for money and every acre cleared is put under cultivation.”

Senator Stiell indicated, that a government-selected committee has been appointed to oversee the venture.

The Grand Bras, Mt. Reuil, Bellevue and Laura are among the Estates identified for action.
New Imani Programme to train 3rd batch of youths

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Ecclesiastic Affairs is getting ready to enroll the third batch of trainees under the New Imani Programme. An additional one thousand (1000) young persons will be inducted into the programme, bringing the total to approximately three thousand (3000) trainees.

Minister of Youth, Sports and Ecclesiastic Affairs, Hon. Emmalin Pierre, was happy to announce that the New Imani is going extremely well and that she is satisfied with what has been happening thus far. Minister Pierre commended the trainees for the level of commitment and discipline which they have been demonstrating since the beginning of their training.

Since the commencement of the first batch of participants on July 1, 2013, scores of Grenadian young persons have been given the opportunity to develop skills necessary for life and by extension, nation building.

The first batch of participants will be focused on Self Development Training for a period of three months. The Minister stated that, based on the design and structure of the New Imani, the Self Development Training will be phased out into two days per week after the first three months.

Participants will be engaged in one of the four areas of the New Imani i.e. Direct Skills, Apprenticeship, Community Development, and Small Business. In relation to the Small Business component, she added that an additional one month of training will be given specifically in small business, after which an application for funding can be made under the New Imani.

Grenada’s Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell has asked Chinese constructors to push to see if that country’s remodeled football and athletic stadium could be finished early in 2015.

The construction project has a completion date for the summer of that year, but Prime Minister Mitchell hopes that the country’s Inter-College athletic games will be staged there early in 2015.

The annual games, which unearthed Olympic champion Kirani James is staged just before Easter of each year.

The next edition of the Inter College Games in 2014 is expected to be staged on the grass tracks at the cricket stadium while the facility is under construction.

The 20 million US dollar refurbishment project is being undertaken by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation.

It will include the building of three main stands with an eight thousand seat capacity, international standard athletic tracks, a professional size football field and cutting-edge media facilities.

“Eight years ago when we decided that this was going to be a major initiative of the government it was on the basis of the potential opportunities of our country in so many areas,” Prime Minister Mitchell said at the official ceremony.

“It was not about our preferences for a facility but the potential opportunities for economic development of our country and of course investing in the future of our young people,” he added.

The Grenada government had signed an agreement eight years ago for the refurbishment of the facility following its destruction by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

However, only the cricket stadium next door was built before Keith Mitchell lost the 2008 general elections.

The new government which replaced the administration had stated that rebuilding the athletics and football stadium was not among its immediate priorities.

“We understand that this moment was unnecessarily delayed after we left office in 2008. The demonstration of the lack of the political will and vision had denied our young athletes an opportunity to compete and train under suitable conditions,” Sports Minister Emmalin Pierre commented.

Many Grenadians are also expected to gain employment during the duration of the reconstruction project.
Grenadians are going back to work, as promised by government, with a number of projects taking place around the country.

One of those projects is the Agricultural Feeder Roads Project, which was launched some months ago. Work has commenced at Laura-Land Estate in St. David intensifying the progress of work under this project.

Returning CCC workers are delighted to be back on the job after four and a half years. “Past times work has been scarce, now they’re back and I appreciate that I could get something to do” said one worker. Another who worked with the company for ten years said, “It was kind of difficult. Sometimes I would get a little three months or four months [of work], so I must feel happy that they’re back now. I could support my family a little better.”

“It’s a wonderful thing to be back on the job and that CCC is here to help the Grenadian people by providing jobs for those who were out of jobs for a while. I guess everyone who is on the site now is happy that we are back on stream again.”

Farmers have also given government the thumbs up with the commencement of the Agricultural Feeder Roads at the Laura Land Estate Road.

CCC’s Project Manager Roberto Jacinto said past workers are being recruited and people in the area are being given priority. Jacinto said the locals will learn how we operate and will be able to get other opportunities with the company. “I am really happy to join the company. I feel happy to see that progress is once again happening in Grenada and I think we all will enjoy it as time goes on,” said another employee.

Chief Technical Officer in the Ministry of Works, Winston Gabriel, said the Ministry has urged CCC to utilize as much labour in the area in which the road is being constructed, and is happy they have complied so far.

Work has already begun on the Laura Land Estate Road in St. David’s. It’s the first of the three roads selected under this project for the parish. The others are Morne Delice/Morne Gazo and Mt. Tranquil.

The duration of work on the Laura Land road is estimated to be 18 months, estimates for the other roads are uncertain but all three roads are being worked on. “We’re hoping to move from Laura to a road in Mt. Tranquil and later on to Morne Delice/ Morne Gazo,” said the Chief Technical Officer in the Ministry of Works.

Throughout the construction period various sections of the road will be closed to facilitate construction activities. Signs will be placed along the road to alert motorists and the general public.

No Rest In Propelling Youth

“As long as there is one young person out there without hope, Government will not rest.” That was the promise of Prime Minister Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell as he addressed the new batch of trainees under the New Imani Programme.

Dr. Mitchell said, “restoring hope” is not just a campaign slogan but a necessity in the process of development. “This is not just about providing a stipend. The most important aspect of this is your self development and your ability to gain a skill and to gain knowledge to empower you for the future,” the Prime Minister said.

The Grenadian leader said that witnessing another of the commencement ceremonies represents an important step in the lives of the nation’s youth and urged them to take this opportunity seriously. “As long as this government is in office, you’ll have a friend working and walking step by step with you as you march forward in your lives to create a better place, a better opportunity for you and your family,” he assured them.

An emotional participant, Colleen Charles, who was enrolled in the first batch, testified of the impact the programme has had on her life as it relates to personality and attitudes. “The life skills have really transformed my life. It has helped me to know how I should react when I’m around different people,” she said.

The Ministry of Youth is working to ensure that the programme not only impacts the young people but also affects Grenada on a whole.

CCC Agriculture Farm Roads Project Underway

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Government Unveils Billionaire Investor
Naguib Sawiris to invest millions in Grenada

Construction has already started on one of three five star resorts planned to be constructed along the coast of the world famous Grand Anse beach.

Egyptian billionaire and businessman Naguib Sawiris is in discussion with government to invest in the island’s tourism sector. But Grenada’s newest investor, whose prominent family in Egypt already owns nearly 50 percent of that country’s stock exchange, says he was attracted to the Spice Isle by the warmth of the Grenadian people. Sawiris, who has already bought beach front property, was introduced to the island by a friend with strong Grenadian roots, Danny Fahkre, Grenada’s Deputy Ambassador to the United Kingdom. Sawiris, Grenada’s Ambassador to France, met with Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell on Thursday in the VIP lounge at the Maurice Bishop International Airport. Sawiris has his eye on three plots on the popular Grand Anse Beach.

He has already purchased Silver Sands, and he is also interested in the Riviera property located between Camerhogne Park and Grenada Grand Beach Resort, while talks continue for the St. George’s University’s lot in Morne Rouge.

It is believed that the construction of hotels and villas on the three properties can contribute as much as 30 to 40 percent of the country’s room stock. Mr. Sawiris is hoping to continue construction on the first lot at Silver Sands as soon as possible.

He believes that if all goes well, within three to four years, Grenada can see three more 5 star hotels on the island.

Sandals Employs 1200 Grenadians
Ongoing expansion creates more jobs

Sandals LaSource, Grenada’s newest hotel has planned its official opening launch for April of this year. The ongoing expansion and upgrading works at the hotel has now generated 1200 jobs and continues to make a significant contribution toward reducing the island’s unemployment figures. Speaking at a time when the regional and global economy continues to face mounting challenges, Sandals Chairman Gordon Butch Stewart announced that over 1,200 employees were employed on the construction site at Point Salines. Stewart says that 99% of the employees are Grenadian nationals, an indication that the national work force is very skilled.

“Grenada has been a phenomenon for us in the Caribbean in the field of construction. The quality of workers in Grenada has been nothing but superb. As a result, all of the companies engaged in technical work are 99% Grenadian,” Stewart noted.

The Sandals Chairman stated that Sandals La Source’s upgrading and expansion is progressing very smoothly. He disclosed that the travel community is responding remarkably to the resort which boasts 225 of the most luxurious suites in three exotic villages.

“We are seeing an extraordinary response from customers who are all excited about spending their winter at our newest creation at Sandals La Source. We are about 75% booked for the 2014 winter and it’s just a tremendous start to our first resort in Grenada. We have been working towards expanding our luxury included concept to Grenada for the last twelve years, and so this initial burst is very heartening,” the Sandals Chairman added.

Sandals acquired the ailing La Source Grenada resort last November and announced a multi-million dollar expansion and upgrading to what will be Grenada’s largest and leading resort-brand. Its arrival to Grenada has been met with much enthusiasm from the business and tourism community. Grenadian tourism officials believe that the inclusion of the 32-year old resort brand will result in an upsurge in airlift and marketing exposure for the island.
The Keith Mitchell Administration is reporting significant reductions in government’s fiscal gap a mere nine months since coming into office.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, Timothy Antoine, has confirmed that the monthly fiscal gap has been narrowed by 3 million dollars. The figure has dropped from 18 million dollars to 15 million with confident projections of reaching 12 million in 2014.

“We have already begun to reduce the monthly gap,” said Antoine during the recent fourth stakeholders’ forum.

“It was 18. It is down now to 15 and I think we will get it down to 12 in the next month or two and then throughout the life of the programme we expect to constantly reduce that gap.”

Faced with a grim economy on its return to office in early 2013, the Mitchell administration has been introducing measures to raise revenue while at the same time reducing expenditure as part of a vibrant approach to economic management.

A waste reduction committee was formed and is reporting significant progress in its efforts to reduce wastage and bring non-personal expenditure down to 20%.

Measures contained in the three year Home Grown Structural Adjustment Programme, set to come on stream this year, are also designed to achieve this goal.

“At the end of the three years we believe the country would have a current surplus on operations and we will begin to see that we will be coming close to a balance in terms of the overall effort,” Antoine explained.

“But that requires us to sustain and to be disciplined throughout, which is to say, we have not just raised the revenues, but also to contain expenditure. We believe with the programme we will be able to reduce the gap significantly and to put us in a much stronger position fiscally than we are at the moment.”

Vouchers help needy families buy school uniforms

Understanding the current situation of unemployment in the country and the plight that many parents find themselves facing, Government has reintroduced the granting of school uniform vouchers to families in need.

Over 6000 persons received vouchers for school uniforms, throughout the tri-island state of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, at the beginning of the school term.

The vouchers were awarded by the Needy Students Assistance Programme to low income families who qualified for assistance from the government.

Minister for Education & Human Resource Development, Honourable Anthony Boatswain, supervised the distribution of vouchers in his constituency at the St. Patrick’s Anglican School and explained some details of the voucher.

“For the needy students attending the primary school, it’s $100 per child. If you have two children going to school it will be $200; three $300. If you have four, five or six [children] it would still be $300. The maximum per family is $300,” the Education Minister said.

Minister Boatswain also stressed the importance of using the voucher for its intended function.

“You cannot use the voucher for anything other than the uniform. We know in the past, because I have been involved with this programme before, parents get the voucher and work out an arrangement with the store owner to take other things apart from the uniform. If that is done you are committing fraud and there are consequences associated with fraud,” Minister Boatswain said.

The assistance came at an opportune time when dollars were stretched to their limits as families prepared to send their children back to school.

Parents and guardians who received vouchers expressed their gratitude to the Ministry of Education for the much needed help.

“I would like to say thanks because most of the parents that don’t have [money] to send their children to school are very thankful for it,” a Parent at the St. Patrick’s Anglican School said.

“I feel so proud about it, I’m so happy that they could help me and I just want to give God thanks and praise,” another voucher recipient said.
Committed to Human Resource Development

Education Minister Hon. Anthony Boatswain, has again underscored the importance of developing the country’s human resource.

He was at the time addressing the Annual Sir Royston Hopkin Scholarship Programme at the Spice Isle Beach Resort.

12 students received assistance from well known hotelier, Sir Royston Hopkin, with support also provided to two children whose parents work at the resort.

This assistance, according to Education Minister Anthony Boatswain, is vital to the development of the country’s human resource. He said this can lead to economic growth.

Minister Boatswain further explained that countries making progress are not necessarily those that are endowed with natural resources, but those that have placed a lot of emphasis on developing the human capital. He said, Barbados is a typical example.

Under the programme, students are provided with assistance for the duration of their secondary and tertiary education.

General Manager Brian Hardy, encouraged the new recipients and existing ones to make use of the opportunity provided.

Mr. Hardy said too often, especially the younger, minds look for opportunities overseas.

“They always think “if I can get the opportunity to go away I will do better.” He however noted, that the opportunities are right here.

“Your opportunity is now, not only the scholarship but the environment in which you live. You have access to the internet, your parents, your teachers and make use of all the other opportunities available to you here in Grenada”, said the resort manager, Brian Hardy.

Todale 137 students have benefited from the assistance provided, which started some 22 years ago.

Sir Royston, Chairman and Managing Director of the resort, urged the children to take education seriously.

He encouraged them to work towards eradicating the country’s unemployment figures.

“Don’t listen to unemployment figures, because the only way we are going to bring down the unemployment is for those of you who are coming out, be it getting your degrees or equipping yourself, it’s your contribution to the public sector and private sector that is going to engender unemployment being eradicated”, Sir Royston Hopkin said.

Editorial

Job creation has been the recurring mantra and mission of the new Keith Mitchell Administration since assuming office a year ago.

War was declared on the country’s high unemployment rate from day one and plans being rolled out focused sharply on sectors ranging from youth employment and youth entrepreneurship, in particular, to the construction sector.

A giant-sized and distracting headache dominated the state of affairs in government one year ago, a fiscal conundrum requiring urgent economic surgery.

In short order, a plan aimed at bolstering revenue and reducing expenditure without retrenching workers began to unfold.

One year on, the waste management committee chaired by Senator Kenny Lalsingh is reporting significant savings for the state.

Prime Minister Mitchell has announced that the country is about to unlock millions of dollars in grants and development aid as part of a homegrown, International Monetary Fund (IMF) supported, structural adjustment programme.

Additionally, several trade unions have now voted in favour of a wage freeze for the duration of the three-year programme effectively providing additional leverage to the government in its dealings with the IMF.

Government’s arrangement with the IMF will not only potentially impact various sectors of our society from welfare to skill enhancement, but will also give Grenada the necessary legroom through debt restructuring as well as set the stage for economic revival.

Adding impetus to this crucial and unprecedented initiative would be the new revenue enhancing measures being rolled out by the new administration, including a new Income Tax model, relationships with ALBA and the Citizenship by Investment Programme.

Already, within a year, we have seen concrete moves to generate revenue, cut expenditure and create employment.

A fresh batch of Imani workers is about to be released on the job market for paid internships after about two thousand, comprising the first two batches, were released last year.

Unemployment has fallen by 7 seven percent in less than a year, crashing from 40.2 percent to 33.5 percent, with confident projections of further declines in 2014.

The construction sector is showing signs of a massive rebound growing by 20 percent after six straight years of decline.

In less than a year the country’s fiscal gap has been narrowed by three million dollars, falling from 18 to 15 with projections of reaching 12 million early in 2014.

The year under review also saw a 2.7 percent growth in the economy, the best performance since 2007.

Payments to a range of international agencies, the launch of the Primary Health Care Programme, the bold move from a Board of Tourism to a Tourism Authority, as well as an ongoing dialogue with social partners are all positive highlights within just one year.

Much hope is being generated in the country based on the enthusiasm and eagerness of the new administration, towards finding solutions to our economic problems, its achievements after just one year in office, and the upbeat prognosis for the years ahead.
Unemployment to be further reduced in 2014

Government has endorsed many major projects to ensure this goal.

The National Athletic Stadium, the St. Patrick Roads Project and the Agricultural Feeder Roads phase 2 are among major projects to be undertaken by government in 2014.

Prime Minister Mitchell, while presenting the 2014 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, outlined the projects.

He said government's focus is economic growth and short and long term employment by building human capital and maintaining infrastructure.

Dr. Mitchell said the Chinese government has agreed to build an athletic and football stadium for Grenada at a cost of approximately $68 million dollars.

"There will be several employment opportunities as government has requested that local labour be used as much as possible" said the Prime Minister.

The contractor is already on site, actual work will start soon and construction is scheduled to be completed by August 2015.

The new stadium is expected to hold a capacity of 7,000 persons.

Meanwhile, the St. Patrick's road project seeks to rehabilitate 16 kilometers of road from Duquesne to Sauteurs and from Mt. Fendue to Pointzfield at an estimated cost of $27 million dollars.

Designs are already completed and funding has been secured from the OPEC Fund for international development ahead of the start of construction next year.

The construction of a new building to house the Grenada Parliament will cost approximately $30 million dollars.

Government has secured additional grant financing from the United Arab Emirates to complete this project.

Seven firms have now been short listed and a tender for this project will soon be launched.

Three roads in the parish of St. David's- Laura Estate, Mt. Tranquil and Morne Delice to Mount Gazo are almost complete.

In 2014, construction activity will commence in all other parishes.

Under the MAREP programme government has allocated $4.25 million bringing more jobs into rural Grenada.

Carriacou’s Princess Royal Hospital Water Project and the Top Hill Senior Citizens Home will be done under the Basic Needs Trust Fund (BNTF).

The water project for the Princess Royal Hospital will be completed this year at a cost of $400,000, while construction has begun on the critical and long-awaited Top Hill Senior Citizens Home at a cost of $1.3 million.

Other projects under the BNTF include, repairs on three medical stations: Petite Martinique, Vincennes and Paradise.

Work will also be done on several other social infrastructure projects including the Non-Pariel Preschool and the St. Paul's Multi Purpose Centre.

The budget provides $10 million dollars for road maintenance, including debushing.

In addition, $6 million dollars has been allocated for asphalt works to support this programme while another $5 million dollars has been earmarked for concrete works to provide roads, drainage and retaining walls.

Under the school rehabilitation project, $28.5 million dollars will be used to fund the renovation of a number of schools.

Upcoming Events

• Carriacou’s Carnival

The 2014 Carriacou Carnival will be celebrated from March 1 - 4.

• Official Launch of LaSource Sandals Grenada

Details to be announced.