



GOVERNMENT HOUSE
NASSAU, BAHAMAS

Message from The Governor-General

It is with a profound sense of pride and joy that I greet you on this our country's 48th Anniversary as an Independent and Sovereign nation.

Forty-eight (48) years ago, we were faced with the daunting task of casting off the yoke of Colonialism and of building a new nation - a nation that is strong, stable, prosperous, and built on the sound principles of industry, love and liberty.

It was through our united courage, ingenuity and abiding faith in God that we successfully overcame untold obstacles in the building of our strong, resilient little country that has gained worldwide respect and admiration.

Today, we are faced with a greater challenge brought on by the twin disasters of global warming and the scourge of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic. We are now once again called upon to summon the courage and the fortitude to defend the health of this little country of ours by making it Covid-free.

Over the past Twenty-two (22) months, we have experienced unprecedented calamities of Covid-19 and of a catastrophic mega-hurricane resulting from global warming.

These two (2) events could easily have permanently crippled our country economically and socially. Instead, however, not only have these catastrophes brought out the best qualities in us but they have also illuminated the inner strength, courage, resourcefulness and resilience of the Bahamian psyche while also bringing us closer together as a people.

This has been a most difficult year for all of us. Indeed, when I reflect on the last several months, I am reminded of, and encouraged by the biblical passage from 2 Corinthians 4:8 which says: *'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not abandoned; Struck down, but not destroyed.'*

Like soldiers at war, our Doctors, Nurses, First Responders and other Medical personnel, together with our Military and National Security personnel, have all stood on the frontlines to defend the health of our nation by mediating the scourge of this killer disease.

We owe these heroes and heroines a great debt of gratitude for their unselfish service rendered on our behalf, many of whom having given the ultimate sacrifice.

Be assured that as our nation grieves with you, my wife, Clara, joins me in extending our personal heartfelt condolences to all those who have lost loved ones due to Hurricane Dorian and Covid-19.

There are many heroes and heroines to be thanked and recognized for their acts of bravery and unselfish service during these critical times.

And today, I join with thousands of Bahamians in celebrating the Hundreds of Bahamians who brought comfort, relief and help to those who needed it during their most agonizing moments.

I am especially proud and humbled to salute all persons who served on the frontlines of the Covid-19 fight and who performed a yeoman's task in helping to save lives.

We also celebrate and sincerely thank our teachers who practically worked miracles to continue teaching our children, either virtually, hybrid, or in-person when it became necessary to do so.

We thank the many Feeding Networks and the hundreds of ordinary Bahamians and Residents for their generosity and kindness in volunteering their time unstintingly during this most challenging period.

Our brave frontline soldiers can never be praised enough or be adequately compensated, for their service to humanity has truly been "*service above self*". But be assured that such sacrificial service is recognized and appreciated and will always be remembered and treasured by a deeply grateful and proud nation.

Let us rejoice in the knowledge that a vaccine has been developed that has the potential to reduce or eliminate the spread of this deadly virus. Both my wife and I are fully vaccinated and doing fine.

Sadly, however, the record shows that too many of us are reluctant to be vaccinated.

We should not play Russian Roulette with this disease. The risk of not taking the vaccine is too great as it exposes yourself, your family and your loved ones to serious health challenges, while concurrently exposing our country to potential economic disaster.

I therefore encourage you to go ahead, take the vaccine so that we will all be safer because you did. But whatever your decision, continue to wear your mask, sanitize your hands and maintain social distance protocols. You owe it to yourself and your loved ones.

While it will take some time before we return to full pre-pandemic socio-economic status, I am confident that we are well on our way as our economy is steadily improving and Bahamians are returning to work. Already a sense of normalcy is slowly returning in our communities.

As the theme for this year's Independence anniversary invites us to a celebration of life, and as we look forward to celebrating our 49th Independence Anniversary, I charge every Bahamian to re-commit to the building of a strong, vibrant and prosperous society undergirded by honesty, integrity, patriotism and the rule of law.

In closing, I encourage you to take to heart, a line from our National Anthem which admonishes us to: "*Pledge to excel, through Love and Unity!*"

On behalf of my wife, Clara, and on my own behalf, I wish each of you a happy and safe 48th Independence celebrations.

May Almighty God continue to bless the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

**The Most Honourable Sir Cornelius A. Smith, O.N., GCMG
Governor-General
Commonwealth of The Bahamas**