

Address by Hon. Yolande Bain Horsford
Minister of Social Development
to the
Ceremonial Launch
of the
Grenada Hurricane Resilient Home Reconstruction Programme
ARD Conference Room, Wednesday, August 30, 2006 10:30 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, Permanent Secretaries, members of the CQA Advisory Group, invited guests, media representatives, ladies and gentlemen.

I must say from the outset that it is a pleasure to be part of this exercise, the launch of the Construction Quality Assurance Mechanism for Grenada. Such a mechanism is long overdue. Indeed, I venture to say, had this mechanism been in place prior to September 7, 2004, we would not be facing the housing challenges that remain with us today.

Hurricane Ivan revealed multiple weaknesses and shortcomings in the way we construct houses and other buildings in Grenada. Hurricane Emily further demonstrated that the cost of repairs will always be higher than the cost of doing it right in the first place. Houses that were repaired or reconstructed post Ivan in adherence to the Building Code remained in tact, while those that were quickly repaired using pre-Ivan methods suffered more extensive damages.

Since Hurricane Ivan, considerable efforts by the Government of Grenada through the Agency for Reconstruction and Development and the Housing Authority have been made, encouraging all stakeholders to adhere to the regulations of the Grenada Building Code.

The formation of the Construction Association of Grenada has also served to enhance awareness among contractors and others in the private sector about the importance of adhering to the Building Code, and avoiding shortcuts that can only result in more expenses for homeowners in the future.

Yet, there are still many instances in which adherence to the Code is overlooked. Some people refuse to change old work habits, while others remain ignorant about the importance of adapting new methods of construction. It is important that home owners enlighten themselves about the Building Code to ensure that every new house constructed in Grenada is a 'house of resilience'.

I therefore am very heartened by the fact that this Construction Quality Assurance Mechanism has been developed through a collaborative effort involving private sector representatives and the relevant Ministries.

The Ministry of Social Development and, indeed, the Government are particularly pleased that the Organisation of American States (OAS) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) have decided to fund the Grenada Hurricane Resilient Home Reconstruction Programme as part of their development assistance to our Country following the devastation caused by Hurricane Ivan two years ago.

As you have heard, ladies and gentlemen, the goal of this Construction Quality Assurance project is to strengthen the resistance of Grenada's housing stock to natural hazards of the type that we all experienced on September 7, 2004. I can assure you that no one knows the need for such a quality assurance how more than we do. I therefore take the opportunity of this Launch to congratulate the members of the Advisory Group for leading the way and demonstrating the commitment of their respective sectors to this new approach to construction in Grenada.

Indeed, I see the CQA as an ideal mechanism by which all stakeholders can make some vitally important adjustments to the way they participate in the reconstruction process in Grenada. I refer to the financial sector, the insurance sector and, yes, the public sector.

As for the public sector, Government recognises that the Physical Planning Unit requires major strengthening and we are committed to this. As a matter of fact, I am especially pleased to note that training for the industry stakeholders is such a significant component of this project, and that a series of training sessions will be held to cater specifically for the inspectors and other Officers of the Physical Planning Unit.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, you would have heard this earlier, but I am satisfied that it is sufficiently important to reiterate the outputs that are expected from this project so that we can be aware of the positive changes that ought to take place at the end, as evaluation is critical.

Apart from the training that will be provided for all the stakeholders, there will be:

- Improved procedures for construction permit review and approval incorporated into the Physical Planning Unit and other agencies involved in the development approval process;
- Improved policies and procedures for home construction loans/disbursement approvals and site inspection implemented by mortgage financing institutions;
- Legislation for certification of building professions, and regulations for the implementation of building standards; and lastly but very importantly

- The implementation of a public information strategy to sensitize homeowners and all concerned of the benefits of the Construction Quality Assurance mechanism.

Ladies and gentlemen, aside from the physical aspects, we must also be aware that the social costs emanating from poor construction can be enormous. The uncertainty as to whether your roof will blow away in the event of another storm, the potential physical danger to family members, as well as vivid memories of your Ivan experience – all of these and more – can contribute to stress and stress-related illnesses. Moreover, social problems can lead to family breakdowns, domestic violence and other repercussions that all result in greater health-related costs for individuals and Government.

Indeed, ladies and gentlemen, the provision of appropriate shelter for Grenadians remains a high priority for the Government. In this regard, I take this opportunity to provide an update on the progress regarding the new Human Settlements at Mt. Gay and Soubise.

As you are aware, these Human Settlements are being financed through a \$1.9 million US loan from the Inter American Development Bank through the Caribbean Development Bank. I am pleased to announce today that the tendering process for the infrastructural works has been completed and Cabinet has agreed to the Tender Board's recommended contractor. The ARD is now seeking approval from the CDB.

Mt. Gay and Soubise are important pilot projects in the context of applying the Human Settlements concept in the provision of shelter. Both sites are approximately seven acres and the ARD architects are endeavouring to create design layouts that will reflect the preferences of Grenadians. In this regard, the ARD has researched the traditional style of housing that has evolved in Grenada.

Some 14 designs have been prepared by the ARD architects that will incorporate single units, town houses and apartments to utilise the limited space and varied contours of the land. The Mt. Gay site is expected to comprise 140 housing units, as well as recreational areas. This means lots of greenery and park areas so that the children can play cricket and other sports close to home.

As Minister responsible for Housing I see enormous potential in the application of the Human Settlement concept in Grenada, as we seek to utilise the limited space that we have in the most efficient manner.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I extend appreciation to the Organisation of American States, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Agency for Reconstruction and Development, Mr. Smith and the CQA Advisory Group for making today's launch possible. The Government of Grenada is committed to working together to ensure this Mechanism is applied, as we continue to work together to Build Back this beautiful Country of ours Better. I thank you.