



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR  
OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER  
No 6 Convent Place  
Gibraltar**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **BUDGET SPEECH 2014**

**BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, THE HON DR J GARCIA**

Mr Speaker,

This is my sixteenth contribution to a debate on the Appropriation Bill in this House, my third as a member of the Government.

### **PARLIAMENT**

There have been many changes to this place over those sixteen years.

Some have been physical changes to the building like the introduction of air conditioning and the refurbishment of the Chamber itself.

Other changes have been of substance, to the rules, the procedures and the practices of the House.

I can remember when I was first elected in 1999, that the Hansard of the previous year's budget was not immediately available to me. As the House knows, Hansard is now published and circulated on the Parliament website quicker than it has ever been before.

Indeed, there was not even a website then.

Even an institution like Parliament, Mr Speaker, has to move with the times. The publication of Hansard reflects the policy of the Government to make such information publicly available in as little time as possible.

We have achieved this.

The proceedings of this House are now televised. The House has been modernised and refurbished beyond recognition. This has taken into account the interests of the public, the press and obviously ourselves as its Members.

I want to announce, Mr Speaker, that the next phase of the refurbishment, will happen shortly. There is financial provision for this project in the estimates of revenue and expenditure before the House today.

This next phase will include much needed works to the ante-room and the back-offices for Mr Speaker, the Clerk and the staff of the House.

It will also include the installation of a lift which will allow easy access for the disabled, the elderly and others into the public gallery for the first time.

Mr Speaker, this building was not constructed to be a Parliament. It was the seat of the Exchange and Commercial Library which had been founded in 1817 as the civilian population's response to their exclusion from the Garrison Library. But that, Mr Speaker, is another story for another day.

I know that the installation of a lift will be welcomed by my honourable friend and colleague the Minister for Equality.

### **SEMINAR ON SELF-DETERMINATION**

Moving on now, Mr Speaker, to other matters.

Last year was the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht. The Government organised a very successful symposium on the subject which included speakers from Gibraltar as well as experts from abroad. I want to thank Jennifer Ballantine Perera and the staff at the Garrison Library for the superb organisation of the event.

This year, Mr Speaker, there will be another symposium, this time on self-determination and referenda. The intention is that another panel of speakers will analyse the subject of self-determination from different perspectives. The principle is different in application and in law, for example, in a non-self-governing territory to what it could be elsewhere.

There is already a provisional list of experts that has been drawn up and I understand that invitations will be going out soon. Once again there will be speakers from Gibraltar as well as panellists from outside our frontiers.

The symposium comes in the year, Mr Speaker, when Scotland will hold a referendum on independence from the United Kingdom. It also comes in the year when the Catalan Government want to hold a similar referendum in order to determine their own fate.

The positions of Scotland and Catalunya are very different to that of Gibraltar and this will no doubt add to the discussion.

Gibraltar is a Non-Self-Governing Territory. We are, Mr Speaker, in the United Nations Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. It will not have escaped anyone here that the number of Non-Self-Governing Territories on the UN list has actually gone up instead of going down. The UN list and removal from it is another very theme for the symposium.

The symposium has been pencilled in for mid-October and the Government is sure that it will prove very interesting and very relevant both from an academic, a legal and a political point of view.

There is provision in the estimates for this event.

### **LOBBYING ISSUES - Washington**

Moving on, Mr Speaker, the seminar ties in with the need that the Government has already identified to increase the political profile of Gibraltar abroad.

We have already announced our plans to step up our lobbying for Gibraltar in Brussels and in Washington.

The House already knows that the Gibraltar-American Council is made up of very supportive and well-connected individuals to whom we are thankful for the continuing interest that they show in Gibraltar.

This is very useful work but more needs to be done.

In this context, the Chief Minister and I met with legal and lobbying firm Holland and Knight during our visit to Washington in March. It is clear to the Government that lobbying works very differently in the United States from what it does in the United Kingdom or in Europe. Therefore the Government has contracted Holland and Knight, initially on a six months basis, in order to drive our campaign in Washington.

A branch of the American Chamber of Commerce has now been established in Gibraltar. The Government welcome this as a first step to increased trade links in the future.

A very successful trade delegation from the United States visited Gibraltar a few weeks ago.

The House knows that the Chief Minister and I were again in Washington this month for a number of political and other meetings which are designed to pursue the Government's agenda.

## **LOBBYING ISSUES - Brussels**

Mr Speaker, it is obvious that Gibraltar needs to do more in Brussels as well.

The Government is looking to develop an office there modelled on the one that we currently operate at Gibraltar House in London. This would involve the recruitment of new staff or the redeployment of existing staff to Brussels.

We will, at the same time, continue to count on the support of Members of the European Parliament.

However, the loss of Sir Graham Watson will be felt in the light of the valuable work that he has done for Gibraltar behind the scenes. The Government remains open, in this new set-up, to the idea of Sir Graham continuing to assist Gibraltar albeit in a different way.

There is a huge amount of legislation coming through the EU pipeline where it is essential that the Gibraltar view is heard at an early stage in order to avoid problems later on. I know that Michael Llamas and his staff at EUID, who do an excellent job for Gibraltar, will very much welcome additional resources on the ground in the European Union capital.

It might even be possible to deploy officials from Gibraltar to Brussels on a rotating three months basis in order to create a pool of experienced public servants in the EU capital.

The College of Bruges which trains European civil servants might also be an attractive proposition for young Gibraltarians.

We will, needless to say, continue to work closely on Gibraltar issues with UKREP, the UK Permanent Mission to the European Union.

Mr Speaker, there are also more than seven hundred members of the new European Parliament, who need to be briefed and made aware of the issues facing Gibraltar.

We had made inroads into the Parliament before the European elections. The base of Gibraltar supporters in Brussels is no longer made up exclusively of British MEPs. This was seen in the two votes earlier this year on Air Passenger Rights legislation and the updated Single European Sky. Hundreds of MEPs of different nationalities and belonging to different political groups supported Gibraltar.

Mr Speaker, we have seen German and even Spanish MEPs take up Gibraltar-related issues over the last couple of years, particularly the queues at the border. This is a good thing and we need to build on it. To do so we need a team of people who will be dedicated to the task.

The election of a new Parliament in May and, later in the year, the appointment of a new Commission that has to be ratified by that Parliament, presents a number of opportunities for Gibraltar to build on what has been achieved already.

This lobbying has, up to now, been coordinated from my office in Gibraltar. Its role has been transformed since we were elected into a hub for the gathering of data and the compilation of reports. These reports are then transmitted to the relevant entity which

includes the European Commission in Brussels or, more recently, the United Nations in New York as well.

The House knows that a detailed dossier of statistics, photographs and press cuttings has been sent to the Chairman of the Committee of 24 and the Chairman of the 4th Committee.

The objective behind this is to challenge the claim made by Spain that the Chief Minister's address to the 4th Committee last year contained falsehoods and insults. This was in respect of the border delays, the incursions at sea and in particular the shooting incident involving the Spanish Civil Guard and a Gibraltar jet-skier.

This European Commission continue to receive monthly updates of the situation at the border. This includes statistical data, video footage, photographic evidence and press cuttings.

There will be another EU mission to the frontier on Wednesday of this week.

Mr Speaker, I am very grateful to everyone that has been involved in this exercise. It is very important as we continue to build up our case against Spain.

## **FRONTIER MONITORING PROJECT**

The House will know that the Government has set up a website in order to monitor the frontier delays. This has proved an extremely useful tool for persons who want to cross the



border into Spain. We also know that the European Commission itself use it to monitor border flow.

The website was launched on the 7th December 2012 which is about a year after we came into office. In the time since then, there have been over twelve million page views. The current average stands at about one million hits per month which equates to about 32,000 page views every day.

This system is being upgraded to a new one using the latest available technology. This is known as the Frontier Monitoring Project (FMP). The House will see that this is provided for in the Estimates.

The FMP system will give up to date information on queuing time, flow rates and camera imaging. Historical data going back 2-3 years will also be available. This will allow a correlation to be made between the length of the queue and key political events that Spain may not like.

The system will allow registered users to receive information on queuing times at pre-set regular intervals via email or whatsapp. This means that it can be programmed to send information on the queues, for example, from 5.00pm - 7.00pm on weekdays for people returning home from work.

It can also be programmed to supply information on a one-off basis for someone who does not cross the border regularly. The system will give the user the optimal time to cross in either direction because it works using the flow rate of cars across the land frontier.

The system has the capability to detect suspicious activities. This gives it a law enforcement capability through the use of ANPR (Automated Number Plate Recognition). Law enforcement agencies will be able to track down any particular vehicle from Devils Tower road to the frontier loop area.

It will also allow for quicker response times for traffic management purposes.

The House knows, Mr Speaker, that works have taken place at the border in order to comply with the recommendations made by the European Commission.

- There is now a five lane customs area with one dedicated red channel and two dedicated green channels with a further two green channels that can also be doubled up as search lanes.
- Provision has also been made for an in-depth search area adjacent to the customs area with incorporated car lift facilities.
- There will also be an ANPR system at the commercial gate to detect all vehicle movements as well as the incorporation of security barriers and gates to better manage customs operations in the area. This will also serve as a deterrent after-hours as the area will be closed off.

It is a credit to Gibraltar that we have complied with the recommendations of the EU Commission at a time when Spain has done practically nothing.

The Government trusts that this will be obvious on Wednesday.

## **AVIATION**

Another EU issue which continues to be current is Civil Aviation.

The House knows that legislation on Air Passenger Rights, on the Single European Sky II+ and the EU Aviation Agreement with Ukraine are all held up because Spain wants to exclude Gibraltar Airport from the scope of the measures.

The Government will continue to work closely with our friends in the European Parliament and with the United Kingdom Government on these issues.

Indeed, the Government welcomes the position taken by the United Kingdom Government in relation to the inclusion of Gibraltar Airport in EU civil aviation measures.

This position is that the exclusion of Gibraltar Airport from EU legislation is a “red-line” issue for the United Kingdom.

Indeed, this was spelt out at the 2nd Aviation Policy Consultative Conference held at the Department of Transport in London on May 13th by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport with responsibility for Aviation Robert Goodwill MP.

Mr Speaker, the Government welcomes the continuation of that robust approach.

The Government would again like to thank all the MEPs from different political groupings who supported Gibraltar on aviation issues in the European Parliament.

Some of these matters now move on to discussion between the Parliament and the European Council, which is composed of the Governments of the 28 Member States. This is where the United Kingdom must maintain its position that Gibraltar airport must be included.

This House can rest assured that the Government, for its part, will continue to make a case for the inclusion of Gibraltar airport in EU civil aviation measures.

## **AVIATION SECURITY**

Mr Speaker, I move on now to aviation security.

Gibraltar Air Terminal Ltd, the Borders and Coastguard Agency and GibAir Handling continue to make significant progress on Aviation Security matters. During the year, as part of this process, the Director of Civil Aviation approved a new Cargo Security programme, which reflects the completely changed procedures required by the new Terminal. As a consequence, GibAir Handling has been revalidated as a Regulated Agent listed on the European Commission Register of such organisations which are allowed to process air cargo.

In common with other European airports and in response to European legislation that came into effect on 31 January 2014, the Airport has introduced new equipment capable of screening liquids for the existence of liquid explosives.

At present the equipment can only be used for certain pre-defined types of liquids, principally for the screening of medicines and special dietary requirements, including baby food. The European Union is shortly to discuss the use of the equipment for other liquid types.

Mr Speaker, in this year's budget there is an allocation of £150,000 set aside to improve security measures on Winston Churchill Avenue in order to stop cars from being able to enter the runway while aircraft are operating from it. The current preventative measures have been in-place for a number of years and have been assessed as being in need of upgrading with modern barriers systems.

## **AVIATION SAFETY**

Mr Speaker, during the Bird management Audit of the Airport, it was recommended that responsibility for the bird control system on the roof of the Air Terminal should be passed from GATL to the dedicated NATS bird management team. A fibre-optic cable linking the Terminal and ATC has now been put in place in order to enable this to happen.

## **GATL**

Over the past year GATL has continued working to enhance the Air Terminal's operational capabilities and improve the passenger experience.

A new stand was opened for the parking of General Aviation aircraft at the eastern end of the present stands. This will permit more aircraft to use the airport. The extra parking will allow this part of the business to develop further without the previous constraint caused by the commitment to stand allocation for the regular scheduled services.

The Old Air Terminal has now been demolished, and all the remaining tenants have been rehoused in both the Air Cargo Building and the new Entry Processing Unit which is located within the new Air Terminal itself. The Government invited expressions of interest for the development of the Old Air Terminal area on 1 March 2014.

Finally, GATL is fully engaged in updating the new Airport Emergency Orders which, once finalised, will replace the present Air Crash Response Plan. The new plan, which is being written in coordination with the Civil Contingencies Committee, RAF Gibraltar, the Director of Civil Aviation and all the other essential and emergency services will provide a more comprehensive and easier to follow set of instructions for personnel to implement in the event of an incident.

Mr Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to thank the many professionals involved in all the many different fields that I have mentioned for their support and assistance.

## **PLANNING**

Mr Speaker,

I now move on to my responsibility as Minister for Town Planning.

The Development and Planning Commission (DPC) continues to discuss Government projects which are presented to it for guidance and advice. I am pleased to report to the House that the same system has now also been extended to a number of Ministry of Defence applications at their request and by agreement with them. This is very welcome news.

The policy of the Government to place its projects before the Commission for guidance and advice has worked very well. It allows the different stake holders to give their views on planning applications and to improve them.

The full plans and applications relating to Government projects continue to be placed on-line on the Government website. This gives the general public more information on Government projects than ever before.

Over the last financial year the Government's commitment to place the planning process on-line has continued to be developed. Once ready it shall allow the planning department to function and offer all its services electronically. This means that the public will be kept abreast of all applications allowing once again for improved dissemination of information. When the system is ready, it will be possible to examine all private and Government projects on-line.

The Government is also in its final stages of completing the new Town Planning Act.

Mr Speaker, the Commission has been able to make its views known to the Government and the Government has listened to and acted on those views.

Members will recall a number of examples of this approach.

The Government decided not to proceed with an additional floor to Moorish Castle, Glacis and Laguna Estates following the advice of the Commission.

The Government also decided not to proceed with the original scale of the Sunborn reclamation in Marina Bay which included a car park following the advice of the Commission and the input of residents of the area.

The system has therefore worked very well and many projects have been improved as a result.

The House will recall that the Chief Secretary has written to all Government departments, agencies, authorities and companies to officially inform them that the policy of the Government is that all its projects should go before the Development and Planning Commission. The only provisos are serious issues of public safety, urgency or national security.

This system allows for inter-departmental or inter-authority consultation and discussion and for information to be exchanged between different stakeholders.

Mr Speaker,



The resources of the Town Planning and Building Control Department have been increased after this Government came to office with the addition of two Assistant Town Planners and an EO administrative grade in the department.

This last financial year two posts were advertised, following the resignation of one of the two new Town Planning Assistants and the retirement of one Town Planning Technician.

The two Town Planners are now involved and consulted over Government projects at the earliest possible stage, often well before a project has been officially submitted. This allows them to express their professional opinions and to have an input sooner. They also form part of the group that examines all expressions of interests in order to consider and evaluate proposals made to the Government.

It will be recalled that the department and its professional staff was totally side-lined by the previous administration.

Mr Speaker,

The Opposition know that the system works better than ever before following the reforms that this Government has introduced.

Meetings continue to be open to the public and the feedback that the Government has received from applicants, objectors, the media and others continues to be very positive indeed.

Many times it is standing room only at DPC meetings. On a number of occasions there have been additional special meetings dedicated to one or two applications only.

Indeed, it was a historic day when the application to construct a football stadium at Europa Point was considered in public by one such special meeting. More than that, the meeting was broadcast 'live' given the high level of public interest in this particular application. This reflects the policy of the Government to increase the openness and transparency of statutory bodies. It is a policy that has served to generate awareness of planning issues and to add to public debate on the matter.

Discussion and debate is a good thing Mr Speaker.

This Government has come so far in such a short time that it is difficult to envisage that all of this used to happen in secret behind closed doors in a boardroom in Europort just over two years ago.

It is not only the public that has access to the meetings.

The fact that architects and project managers are often present continues to prove very useful. Most if not all queries can be dealt with on the spot thereby allowing the decision-making process to be expedited.

The Commission has listened carefully to countless applicants and objectors who have chosen to address it in person. It has then taken a decision with the benefit of this input and after considering the pros and cons of each application.

Mr Speaker,

There were sixteen meetings of the Development and Planning Commission during the last financial year. Those meeting considered 359 applications, 86 of which were for Government projects. The details of all these applications are available on-line as are the minutes which show the deliberations and the decision in each case.

Mr Speaker, Building Control is also part of my remit.

The Building Control's main duties are the administration and enforcement of the Building Regulations made under the Public Health Act by inspection of deposited plans. This is followed up with the necessary site inspections in order to determine that the works have been carried out to the approved plans and specifications.

The Town Planning and Building Control sections shall soon be able to receive fee payments at their offices. This may seem a pretty odd announcement to make. The Government intends to replace the cumbersome system that we inherited where the public submit their papers at Building Control in Europort and then have to go to the

Environmental Agency in Town Range in order to effect the relevant payment. The new one-stop-shop will make it easier for applicants.

Mr Speaker, the number of applications that received Building Control approval in 2013 is 497. This is a record number. There has been a steady increase from 351 in 2011 to 383 in 2012 to 497 now. A total of 177 completion certificates were issued in 2013.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Department of Town Planning and Building Control for the professional and enthusiastic approach that they have shown in the implementation of the policies of the Government.

## **LANDS**

Mr Speaker,

I move on now to lands.

During the financial year 2013/2014 28 residential properties were sold, generating an income of £ 9.3 million. One Government flat was also released as part of a purchase. Leases for some of these properties are pending completion which means that the final figure might vary should prospective purchasers not complete.

Some of the properties that have been sold are in the Upper Town. A number of impressive schemes have already been presented to the Development and Planning Commission for the regeneration of parts of the Upper Town through the refurbishment of such properties.

There is now a process in place to identify the next batch of residential units to put out to tender.

Mr Speaker, there is clearly a demand for properties in the Upper Town. The Government understands that one scheme with over 20 flats sold out within hours of being marketed.

There are also a number of former Ministry of Defence properties that have been put out to tender. The most recent were the sixteen units at Europa Pass Battery which are expected to raise just under £ 7 million.

This money is then committed to re-provide the MOD with new buildings in a different location. New for old. This is what the previous administration agreed to under the Lands Agreement of July 2011.

A total of £ 24 million will have been received from the sale of residential properties since 2012 once all pending sales have been completed.

Additionally, 19 commercial premises have been allocated via tender during the financial year 2013/2014 and an income of £ 1.2 million will have been received once all the allocations are completed. These will be for a range of uses including retail, offices, storage, and restaurants.

Mr Speaker, the House will have seen that various adverts have been published inviting expressions of interest. These have covered areas such as Rosia Bay, the Northern Defences, the old air terminal site, Ragged Staff Magazine and the Eastside reclamation.

All of these, except the Eastside, have now closed.

The successful proposed development at Rosia Bay was selected from sixteen interested parties. The successful applicant has already presented the project to the Development and Planning Commission.

The expressions of interest in the Northern Defences and the old air terminal site are under consideration and that for Ragged Staff closed on 23 May 2014.

A total of £3,020,000 will have been received from commercial tenders since 2012 once all assignments are finalised.

Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the staff of the Lands Office in Convent Place and the management and staff of Land Property Services for their assistance over the financial year.

## **GIBTELECOM**

Mr Speaker,

I will now say a few words in my role as the Chairman of Gibtelecom.

2013 was again a productive year for the company. Business turnover increased year-on-year, giving the Company a solid base from which to develop and continue to make the much needed investment in infrastructure for the years ahead.

## **VDSL**

The roll-out of the Company's Next Generation Network, started last year, is ongoing with the continued deployment of VDSL2 technology to bring superfast broadband to Gibraltar. This is being made possible through the installation of 'active' cabinets across Gibraltar, bringing the fibre to the kerb and consequently closer to customer premises to facilitate higher internet speeds.

I can now confirm that 95% of homes are currently within reach of this technology, with the Company reporting that it expects to complete its deployment plan by the end of this year. In all, some 50 cabinets have been or are being installed around various points in Gibraltar.

I am pleased to inform Honourable Members that Gibtelecom now has plans to significantly increase the broadband speeds currently available to their customers before the year is out.

## **SUBMARINE CABLE**

Gibtelecom is also securing for itself a role as a global carrier offering diverse communication routes and data centre services, with a range of contracts extending well beyond Gibraltar. The investment in the Europe India Gateway (EIG) submarine cable system is the driver for Gibtelecom's enhanced connectivity worldwide and the development of their new overseas business transporting communications carriers' traffic.

Gibtelecom has recently established a technical point of presence in Marseilles, France - a major gateway for cables into Europe - in addition to the ones already set up in Gibraltar and London. This is good news for Gibtelecom and also for Gibraltar plc.

## **HAVEN PURCHASE**

Gibtelecom completed the purchase of the Haven Building from HM Government of Gibraltar in January this year. The building, which until recently housed the Government's Treasury and other public sector offices, has been acquired on a 150 years' lease for £5.8 million.

The building is connected to Gibtelecom's John Mackintosh Square headquarters and will facilitate the expansion of the Company's technical facilities in the Haven building and allow the business to house, amongst other things, its next generation communications switch that will eventually replace the existing System X exchange located in the adjoining City Hall.

Because of the magnitude and complexity of developing the next generation technology, together with reparenting the extensive cabling to and within City Hall, this project is expected to take a number of years to complete. But once it is done Gibtelecom will be more in control of its own destiny, and as importantly we will return the whole of the City Hall to its iconic status as a centre of history and governance in Gibraltar. Part of the arrangement will be for the Company to eventually remove that monstrosity of a bridge between the historic City Hall and the Haven Building that was necessary in its time.

## **4G**



Mr Speaker, the Gibraltar telecoms regulator has recently awarded Gibtelecom one of three 4G mobile licenses, conditional on the Company being able to launch superfast mobile broadband services by the tail end of next year.

The Company is also progressing the rollout of a Gibraltar-wide Wi-Fi network, which will complement the existing mobile signals.

Staying with mobile services, Gibtelecom recently received approval from the Development and Planning Commission for the erection of much needed new mobile masts sites. It is expected that some of these sites will be operational within the next two to four months, with the remaining sites coming on line within the next twelve months. As a result of the way mobile signals propagate and the changing topography of Gibraltar due to building developments, the business needs a higher number of sites to satisfy the new lower power emission planning requirements. This another example of Gibraltar being a leader on environmental issues and reducing our carbon footprint.

Mr Speaker, I am confident that Gibtelecom continues to be well placed to meet the twin challenges of running a business of which Gibraltar can be proud in the ultra-dynamic communications world, whilst providing an excellent customer experience. The Company takes a well-rounded and balanced approach by continuing to invest in infrastructure and technology, as well as in its people. I am sure that Honourable Members will agree that this is the way to ensure that society's demand for more and more communications can be met for many years to come.

I would like to conclude by paying tribute to the personnel of Gibtelecom, its staff and its management, who are helping the business and Gibraltar keep pace with the fast moving world of communications technology.

## **CONCLUSION**

Mr Speaker,

The Government continues to deliver its programme as set out in the election manifesto of the GSLP/Liberals.

This is what we were elected to do.

A large number of these commitments have already been completed, many more are in progress and others will be tackled soon.

On coming into office we opened up meetings of the Development and Planning Commission to press and public scrutiny.

- We opened up Parliament to live broadcasts of its proceedings.
- Soon afterwards, we identified several plots of land where over 1000 homes are now being built to house our people.
- The success of Commonwealth Park is visible for all to see.
- This year we announced changes to working hours for public sector workers.

- We announced that the Youth Centre would again open on Saturdays.
- We built and refurbished play-parks for our children.
- Our tourist product in general and our beaches are now looking better than ever.
- There are new schools going up, a new power station in the pipeline and Government rented housing estates are being refurbished.
- There are more Gibraltarians in employment.
- The environmental filter is already in place.

**This** is what we promised to do and we are doing it.

Mr Speaker, in so many ways we have transformed Gibraltar.

We have introduced a degree of openness, accountability and transparency into the conduct of Government that simply did not exist before - whatever the Opposition may say.

We continue along the path of greater e-Government in order to bring the administration closer to our people and into their homes.

Having said all that, there is still work to be done.

We are confident, Mr Speaker, that we will continue to deliver what we promised between now and polling day.

I take this opportunity to thank you Mr Speaker and to thank the past and present Clerk and the staff of Parliament for their assistance and support over the year.

I would also like to thank my personal staff in No 6 my personal secretary Coral Schembri, PA Ernest Francis and Principal Secretary Caine Sanchez.

Thank you.

ENDS