

32nd Anniversary Independence of Antigua & Barbuda 2013



Prime Minister
Dr. The Honourable W. Baldwin Spencer

Greetings
32nd Anniversary of Independence
Celebrations Antigua & Barbuda
Association of Montreal, Canada

My Fellow Antiguan and Barbudans and friends in the Diaspora.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to extend Greetings on the 32nd Anniversary of political independence of our beloved nation Antigua and Barbuda.

As we celebrate the 32nd Anniversary of Independence, the theme, "*Antigua and Barbuda: One Family; celebrating with pride, vision and integrity*", reflects what it truly means to be Antiguan and Barbudan.

Every year at this time, we reflect and celebrate with pride the contributions of the men and women of our nation who have gone beyond the call of duty in giving service to the citizens and residents of Antigua and Barbuda. It is the selfless dedication of giving back to the nation by ordinary Antiguan and Barbudans that make our nation great.

Our independence celebrations, particularly those activities that involve our children, teens and youth, not only give us a sense of pride in the future of our country, but they are a reflection of

the vision that we have for the future of the nation.

When we plan for our young people, we envision a future that is secure with a cadre of educated and well-trained professionals. That is why the government remains committed to ensuring that the greatest number of our young people are given the opportunity to gain university level education. Our future will be secure if our vision for the future is paralleled with our programmes and policies.

It is your government's pledge to continue our social programmes for our young people ranging from the school uniform and school meals programmes, ICT initiative to our scholarship programmes. Our Leadership through Excellence Award Programme (LEAP) and the Work Experience Programmes have seen successes. In the Leap Programme, young graduates are given a three-month attachment to a Ministry, Department or Agency within Government. During their three month attachment the participants are mentored and exposed to the operations of the Public Sector. Each LEAP candidate receives a monthly stipend and is eligible for a \$5000 award upon successful completion of the programme.

The Work Experience Programme, operated through the Ministry of Labour also provides on the job training and development for our young people with the option of full employment after their period of attachment.

As a government, we do all of this with integrity. We remain focused, consistent, committed and honest in our actions for the nation and people of Antigua and Barbuda.

Over the past year, Antigua and Barbuda has continued to make strides in its efforts to improve economic conditions in the wake of the global economic and financial crises. The Government continued to control expenditure and sought to improve overall fiscal management, in keeping with the objectives of the Fiscal Consolidation Programme.

The fiscal policies pursued by the Government have resulted in a significant improvement in fiscal performance. There was significant improvement in the overall fiscal balance as the deficit declined from 5.3% of GDP in 2011 to 1.4% of GDP in 2012.