



THE 2018 MANIFESTO

VISION 2023 AND BEYOND...



REBUILDING TOGETHER!
SAFER WITH LABOUR

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE FROM GASTON BROWNE, LEADER OF THE ABLP

Dear Fellow Citizens and Residents of our beloved Antigua and Barbuda.

We are holding the 2018 General Election, one year ahead of time. Some persons have asked: why? In the spirit of openness and transparency that has been the character of my leadership, I give you my answer below.

Economy at trajectory of growth that needs certainty

The General Election is being held ahead of time because the economy is at the point of a trajectory at which it needs certainty and predictability to continue the rapid growth it experienced over the last four years.

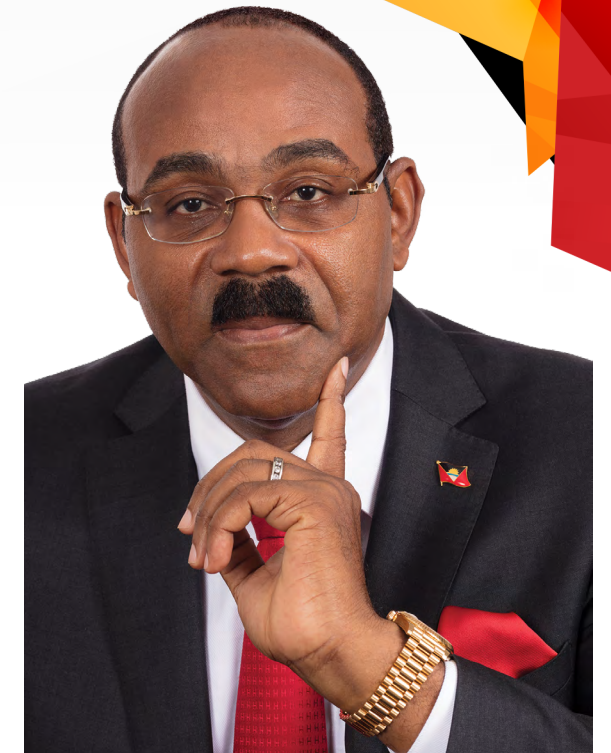
Since June 2014, we have recovered the 21% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or EC\$800 Million in value, that the UPP destroyed.

Antigua and Barbuda became the fastest growing economy of all 15 Caribbean Community countries in 2016 at 6.5%; it has also regained its enviable position of being the largest economy in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). In 2017, despite the effects of Hurricanes Irma and Jose, we again recorded impressive growth, according to the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank while is expected to be approximately 4.5% on the final revision.

There is great business confidence in the economy – a reversal of the position under the UPP in which the country suffered severe economic decline, financial sector instability, high unemployment, mounting taxes, high cost of living, and shockingly bad governance, including a consuming sea of insolvency among several government statutory bodies and private sector companies, including banks.

Prospects of Elections a year away will hurt economy and slow employment

Stabilisation of the financial and banking sector and the growth in the economy achieved by the ABLP administration, along with decisive leadership since 2014, are encouraging more investment. However, the prospect of a general election a year away will cause a slowdown of investment as the business community waits to see the outcome. In turn, this will slow the momentum that has picked-up in the provision of jobs.



Investment funds cannot be left idle. The prospect of a delay in a return on investment will shift funds elsewhere, making the task of attracting other investment a protracted affair. It is in the interest of economic growth, employment and social advancement that the general election be held now, establishing conditions of certainty, predictability and stability for the business community and the international and regional development finance agencies.

To deal with the international community, particularly for financing development, Antigua and Barbuda needs a government with a proven track-record. The ABLP, in four years, reduced the UPP-incurred debt of \$320 million with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to \$18 million which we intend to pay-off by June 2018, if not before.

The arrears on other debts to the Caribbean Development Bank, the Kuwait Fund and the China Ex-Im Bank have been paid, and there is now greater confidence in the country's capacity to meet its debt obligations. Subsequently, Antigua and Barbuda is once again eligible for financing that is crucial to its economic growth and to more and better jobs.

Further, the ABLP's achievement of converting debt into ownership and dividends for the people of Antigua as is evidenced in the acquisition and profitability of the West Indies Oil Company (WIOC), and the turn around to viability of public corporations such as the Antigua Port Authority, Antigua Public Utility Authority and the Transport Board, have imbued a high sense of confidence in Antigua and Barbuda among international lending agencies.

The Economy ready for major take-off

The country is, therefore, readied for a major economic take-off that will produce: full employment; more and better social welfare services in health, education and elderly care; and investment in infrastructural development such as roads, highways, a new water-piping system and the installation of renewable energy technology to reduce the cost of electricity to the nation. We have laid out these plans in clear detail in this Manifesto, Vision 2023 and Beyond: Making our Country Better for Good.

A careful reading of these pages will reveal well thought-out plans and the means to implement them, including financing. The ABLP's record of transparent implementation and accountable accomplishment, over the past four years, has been acknowledged by regional and international financial and development agencies.

Delaying the economic take-off, that is now so obviously before the nation, would slow-down the economy at a time that it can be accelerating; such a slow-down would suspend the opportunities for job creation and faster development.

Elections now in the interest of growth, jobs, stability and progress

Therefore, in the interest of the people of Antigua and Barbuda and our economic growth and social advancement, it is better to hold the general elections now giving the country a clear 5-year pathway to consolidating the tremendous gains of the last four years and building on them for better and for good.

The Choice Before the Nation

The choice before our nation is proven incompetence and maladministration by a UPP government led by the principal architect of the economy's ruin, the former Finance Minister Harold Lovell, or the return of the ABLP government, under my decisive stewardship, which has recovered our country from catastrophe, improved its wealth and positioned it to continue to deliver tangible benefits for all our people.

I assure you that good governance, accountability and transparency will continue to be the principles by which the Government I lead will be administered. The interests of Antiguan and Barbudans will continue to be front and centre of my Government's concern.

Our determination is to continue to build Antigua and Barbuda over the next five years, and to erect the pillars of our development for years yet to come. Let us continue together in a journey of growth and progress that will uplift all our people, leaving no sector omitted, no one left out and no one left behind.



Gaston Browne.

REBUILDING TOGETHER!

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Gaston BROWNE
St. John's City West



Robin YEARWOOD
St. Philip North



Samantha MARSHALL
St. Mary's South



Arthur NIBBS
Barbuda



Melford NICHOLAS
St. John's City East



Colin JAMES
All Saints East & St. Luke



Steadroy BENJAMIN
St. John's City South



Maria BROWNE
St. John's Rural East



Dean JONAS
St. George



Asot MICHAEL
St. Peter



Molwyn JOSEPH
St. Mary's North



E.P. Chet GREENE
St. Paul



Charles FERNANDEZ
St. John's Rural North



Michael BROWNE
All Saints West



Lennox WESTON
St. Phillip South



Daryll MATTHEW
St. John's Rural South



Londel BENJAMIN
St. John's Rural West



Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA LABOUR PARTY BELIEVES:

- In an inclusive, equal opportunity society.
- In respect for all groups in our society.
- In caring for our elderly.
- In providing the means for our young people to develop and flourish in business, in sport, in ownership and in their chosen careers.
- In the inborn worth of the individual as one of the richest assets of our nation.
- In not criminalising our youth over a few grams of marijuana; that is why we passed a law decriminalising such possession.
- In the creation of wealth and the promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit amongst all our people.
- In facilitating foreign direct investment while encouraging and helping investment by our citizens so that they occupy an important space in our country's economy.
- In treating our business community with fairness and respect, encouraging their profitability and expecting them to meet their due obligations to the nation.
- In training and educating our people to own, to manage and to hold decision-making positions in all areas of our society.
- In providing health care from the cradle to the grave so that no person wants for medical attention and medicines to enhance their quality of life.
- In ending and preventing child abuse and creating an environment of child care and protection.
- In gender equality and in the rights of men and women to equal pay, equal access to jobs, equal qualification for promotion.
- In respect for women in our society and in ending all forms of violence against them.
- In a just and humane society where those who cannot provide for themselves can live in dignity.
- In the freedoms of thought, worship, speech, association and choice.
- In the rule of law and justice, giving all citizens equal rights under the law and the responsibilities to maintain it.
- In a secure and safe society, free from crime and corruption; and in providing the means to prevent these activities and punish their persistence.
- In parliamentary democracy in which the people choose and change their government and legislature freely.
- In Government that is accountable and transparent in its affairs.
- In Government being responsive so that it meets its obligations to all its citizens.





REBUILDING TOGETHER!

SAFER WITH LABOUR



The development of Antigua and Barbuda and the ABLP inextricably intertwined

The story of Antigua and Barbuda's development is inextricably intertwined with the work of the Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party (ABLP), on behalf of the people.

Every major development in all areas of the nation's political, social and economic development has been the result of the galvanizing and representational work of the ABLP and its representatives.

- **Trade Unions and Workers Rights:** The Antigua Trades and Labour Union (the precursor to the ABLP) was formed in 1939 and fought for the rights of workers, including higher wages and better conditions of work and so ended the exploitative period that followed slavery.
- **Elected Representation:** In 1946, stalwarts of the AT&LU, formed the Antigua Labour Party led by Vere Cornwall Bird Snr, giving Antiguan and Barbudans elected representation for the first time.
- **Voting Rights for all:** ABLP fought for the rights of all Antiguan and Barbudans to vote and the first elections under adult suffrage was held in 1951.
- **Ended worker exploitation:** In 1952, the sugar barons, who dominated the economy, were forced by the AT&LU and the ALP to increase workers' wages, ending tyranny and injustice.
- **Built all, except one Secondary School:** Successive ABLP governments, starting in 1955 with the Princess Margaret School up to 2017 with the Sir Novelle Richards School, brought secondary education to the people. To date,

the ABLP has built every secondary school in Antigua and Barbuda, except one. In 1962, the ABLP government assumed responsibility for the Antigua Grammar School and the Antigua Girls High School to broaden accessibility to secondary education for all.

- **Education levy for Educational Progress:** In 1994, the ABLP government introduced the Education levy as a specific and dedicated means of providing for education. The levy has been used for scholarships, training, schools' improvement and expansion that have raised the social and economic standing of Antigua and Barbuda.
- **Lands bought for the People:** In 1967, the ABLP government bought 33,000 acres of arable and beach land from the Antigua Sugar Factor and the Syndicates Estates, to provide land for development and for ownership by the people of Antigua and Barbuda.
- **Elimination of Night Soil and provision of toilets:** Between 2014 and 2015, the ABLP government eliminated the unsanitary practice of transporting night soil and provided toilet and sewerage facilities for less well-off communities.
- **Opened and sustained Tourism:** In the early 1960's, the ABLP government opened Antigua and Barbuda to tourism, creating better paid work for the people and diversifying the economy from its dependence on sugar cultivation. Tourism became the industry of transformation and modernisation of the country.

- **Majority of Hotels constructed under ABLP:** Between 1960 and 1968, several hotels were constructed under the ABLP government, and the economy enjoyed spectacular average annual growth of 8.5%. This performance was repeated between 1977 and 2003 when the remaining hotel resorts were built or expanded.

- **Built the Ports for Tourism:** The ABLP Government constructed and expanded the Deep-water Harbour, the Heritage Quay Pier and the Nevis Street Pier to accommodate Cruise ships, including the Quantum Cruise vessels. Under the ABLP watch, English Harbour, Falmouth Harbour and the Jolly Beach Marina were created or expanded and improved to produce a magnificent Yachting industry, including the world-renowned Sailing Week.

- **Constructed Heritage Quay as Duty-Free Port and facilitated Redcliffe Quay:** The ABLP government facilitated the construction of Redcliffe Quay in 1979, sweeping away a derelict area and turning it into a shopping and recreation centre for locals and tourists. The ABLP went on to build Heritage Quay as a duty-free shopping area to complement the Heritage Quay Pier and to enhance the tourism product, making the country competitive with other major destinations and increasing revenues and jobs.

- **International Airport:** The ABLP government established the International Airport on Antigua giving the country a gateway to the world and multiplying the benefits of tourism. Successive ABLP governments have superintended its expansion and modernisation of the Airport, including the present V.C. Bird International Airport Terminal building.

- **Constitutional Advancement:** The ABLP achieved constitutional advancement for Antigua and Barbuda through Associated Statehood in 1967 and independence in 1981,

giving the people full control of the affairs of the country.

- **Barbuda Local Government:** ABLP governments superintended the establishment of Local Government on Barbuda with the Barbuda Local Government Act of 1976 and its subsequent strengthening in 1980 to give the Barbuda Council the authority to manage key aspects of the internal affairs of Barbuda, while the Central Government of Antigua and Barbuda provides financial support.

- **Built the modern Health Infrastructure:** ABLP Governments built the modern health infrastructure, including the Mount St. John's Medical Centre (MSJMC) and the Medical Benefits Scheme, that has transformed medical care and access to medicines.

- **Modern Surgical Procedures:** Between 2014 and now, the ABLP government modernised the facilities of the MSJMC to provide, for the first time in the country's history, for kidney transplants, implants of stents for heart patients, treatment of cancer patients and restoration of sight to hundreds of people who were near-blind, revolutionising medical care for the people.

- **Social Security Scheme:** While it was a PLM government that introduced the Social Security Scheme in 1973, it has been successive ABLP governments from 1976 to 2004 and 2014 to now that have maintained and expanded the scheme for the benefit of the people, giving the elderly an income and comfort in their non-working years.

- **Twice Ended Personal Income Tax:** ABLP governments twice ended onerous Personal Income Taxes allowing the people of Antigua and Barbuda to keep their earnings in their pockets. When the ABLP became the government in 1976, it ended the Personal Income Tax regime of the PLM administration; it ended it again in 2015 after it was reintroduced by the United Progressive Party (UPP) in 2005.

- **Twice turned around high unemployment:** ABLP governments have twice turned around economic decline and high unemployment. After the PLM regime closed the sugar industry in the 1970s without providing for any alternatives, unemployment rose to over 50%. The ABLP government reduced that unemployment to 6% by 2004 when it lost office, but the incoming UPP regime decimated the economy, raising the jobless level to over 30%. The ABLP has since reduced that number to 10% and is continuing its programme of creating full employment.

NOTE: Apart from starting the Social Security Scheme and building one secondary school, the PLM/UPP, in the almost 50 years of their joint existence, gave the country: high unemployment, personal income tax, ruined economies and the IMF.



**Providing opportunities for our children.
They are our nation's future.**



CHAPTER ONE

ABLP Accomplishments For The People In Less Than Four Years

The new Antigua Commercial Port, presently under construction.

ABLP ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR THE PEOPLE IN LESS THAN FOUR YEARS

The State of the Economy in 2014

The ABLP has been in office for less than four years. It inherited an economy in shambles from the UPP. Between 2009 to 2014, the economy contracted by an annual average rate of 3.4 percent in the worst period of mismanagement our nation has ever witnessed.

Our country suffered three years of negative growth. Cumulatively, that amounts to a regression of 21 percent. Simply put, nearly a quarter of Antigua and Barbuda's economy or more than \$800 million in value went up in smoke, burnt by searing incompetence and maladministration.

Additionally, the country was plunged into financial sector instability, high unemployment, mounting taxes, high cost of living, and shockingly bad governance, including a consuming sea of insolvency among several government statutory bodies.

It is a matter of public record, that the UPP bankrupted our nation and, to try to bail out its abject failures, took on an IMF structural adjustment programme in 2010, borrowing \$320 million.

And, while the UPP administration sucked over \$800 million out of the economy; it also borrowed huge sums of money, applied stringent taxes to already overburdened tax payers, caused businesses to close, new investment to halt, unemployment to rise, mortgage and loan defaults to increase, and poverty to expand.

They decimated our country and the living standards of our people.

Undaunted, the ABLP leapt to the task of making our country better for good, improving, uplifting and advancing our economic and social circumstances for the benefit of all.

A list of those achievements appears below:

1. ABLP REBUILT THE ECONOMY

Despite severe challenges, in less than four years, the ABLP government has:

- Restored the \$800 Million in value, that the UPP, and particularly Harold Lovell as Finance Minister, demolished.
- Put the country on a firm trajectory of growth. In 2016, Antigua and Barbuda was the fastest growing economy in this hemisphere at 6.5 per cent.
- Notwithstanding the effects of the September 2017 hurricanes, in that year our nation regained its enviable place as the largest economy in the OECS sub-region; larger than other countries with bigger populations than ours.

Despite every trial, in less than four years, we have enjoyed economic growth that halted the decay in our economy and set us on a new course to prosperity.

This is a country recovered from the way down. This is a country reset, and on its way up.

2. ABLP TURNED THE NATION FROM DEBTOR TO OWNER

The UPP left the nation an empty Treasury and demands that were plenty in June 2014. The UPP did not pay suppliers for goods and services they contracted. Despite all the taxes they imposed, they had borrowed so much and introduced so many wasteful projects, which were not revenue-generating, that they had no money.

The country was burdened with a debt stock of approximately \$3.7billion with a repayment schedule of over \$430 million annually. The debt to GDP ratio was 104% - indeed, the country was bankrupt.

The ABLP government accomplished the following:

- Saved the country from defaulting on the IMF debt and the dreadful consequences that would follow. The UPP indebted our nation to the IMF to the tune of \$320 million. The ABLP has currently reduced that debt to \$20 million.
- Reduced the debt to GDP ratio from 104% to 75% today, giving the government more space in which to devote monies to human improvement and infrastructural development; and will settle it in full shortly.
- Turned Oil debt to asset ownership by the people: The West Indies Oil Company was owed more than \$80 million and was threatening to discontinue supply of oil. The ABLP government bought WIOC without a cent of taxpayers' money through a creative public sector-private sector partnership that not only transferred wealth to the people of Antigua and Barbuda, but gave taxes and dividends to the Treasury, amounting to \$15million over the last two years.



- Turned debt for water supply to another people-ownership benefit: SEMBCORP Antigua Water Ltd – was determined to cut off supplies to the entire country in 2014, because the UPP administration owed more than \$22 million and offered no repayment plan. The ABLP extinguished the arrears, absorbed SEMBCORP into the Antigua Public Utilities authority; thereby again turning our people from bad debtors to owners. Another \$25 million has been invested in reverse osmosis technology and capacity to meet all of our water needs, resulting in an aggregate investment of \$45 million in improving the water situation.

- Recovered the unfinished and abandoned Car Park: This was not only a huge eye-sore in our nation’s capital for years, it was also a huge debt that the UPP incurred, giving no benefit to the people. The ABLP government purchased the unfinished car-park property valued at US\$25 million for US\$6 million and, in another public sector-private sector partnership with local persons, we are transforming the building into a multi-purpose car park and office complex, that will both save and generate revenues.



US\$25 million car park abandoned by the UPP

- Protected Depositors Money; Saving the Banking Sector: ABI Bank was bankrupt and on the point of collapse. The ABLP government resolved the ABI Bank issue and stabilized our financial sector, thereby saving over half-a-billion dollars of our people’s deposits. In addition, the ABLP Government paid approximately \$17 million in workers’ benefits to staff of ABI Bank, which they would have otherwise lost. And the government invested \$30 million to stabilize and rescue Caribbean Union Bank. Today the people of Antigua and Barbuda own approximately 80 percent of the shares of that bank and it has already become an important institution in our financial sector.
- Negotiated the Solution to Crippling Antigua Power Company Debt: The UPP government also left the country with a huge debt of \$221 million in compensation to the Antigua Power Company. It was a debt that this nation would have struggled to pay, and which could only have been managed by not spending on health, education and other social welfare sectors. By negotiating a creative and innovative solution of using a Power Purchase Agreement, the ABLP saved the people of our country a net sum of approximately \$200 million which can be used for social and economic advancement.

Ten years of UPP reckless liabilities have been turned into ownership and earnings for the people of Antigua and Barbuda under the ABLP in under four years.

3. ABLP SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED THE BARBUDA DISASTER



The ABLP Government successfully managed the disastrous consequences of the most ferocious storm ever to slam the Caribbean when Hurricane Irma decimated Barbuda in September 2017.

Even though there was no manual for the evacuation of the entire population of an island, and no previous experience of dealing with the problem of a displaced population, impressive management skills were displayed by the ABLP Government that:

- Safely evacuated every resident of the island without injury or loss of life (the one death occurred in the height of the hurricane);
- Provided shelter for all the residents who needed it;
- Continued to pay the Councillors and employees of the Local Government Council;
- Organised for the continued education of children at schools on Antigua so that their education would be uninterrupted;
- Paid for the accommodation of many in places other than government-owned facilities;
- Refurbished and reorganised government facilities as accommodation and carried the cost of electricity and water supplies;



Nurses' Hostel where Barbudians are housed

Started the process of rebuilding the island’s infrastructure so that residents who wished to do so could return home.

In the process, the ABLP Government spent millions of dollars to provide for the safety, health and well-being of all Barbuda residents.



4. ABLP RESTORED TOURISM TO VIBRANCY

The ABLP turned-around the Tourism industry and restored its vibrancy, its contribution to revenues, jobs, and an improved quality of life. Major examples are:

- Raising \$100 Million within our first six months in office to clear UPP debt arrears, including to China Ex-Im Bank which was about to down grade the debt and discontinue funding the completion of the new VC Bird Airport Terminal;
- The completion and opening of the most modern international airport in the Caribbean, enhancing our competitiveness as a preferred tourism destination and opening the way for hundreds of thousands of visitors to contribute to our economic growth;
- Investment of US\$30 Million in the dredging of the St John's Harbour and the building of new and improved pier at Heritage Quay to host the world's Quantum cruise ships that have allowed for the huge increase in the number of cruise ship passengers and for spending by tourists in the economy;
- Allocating millions of dollars to promotion and marketing our country in major markets and increasing the number of visitors and the amount of tourist-spending for the benefit of the nation.



5. ABLP REVERSED UPP LIES ON PERSONAL INCOME TAX



The UPP leadership pledged not to introduce personal income tax as a blatant lie to lure voters. The first thing they did in office was to impose

income taxes.

The ABLP fulfilled its pledge to remove personal income tax, leaving persons' earnings in their pockets, and allowing them to spend on the goods and services they choose, and to save for future needs.

- In turn, businesses improved from people having more money to spend.
- Increased savings also enlarged deposits in the banking system and made credit available for car purchases, home construction and house improvements, and for the setting-up of new viable businesses and expansion of existing ones.

6. ABLP HEALED THE SORE OF HEALTH AND DELIVERED URGENT REMEDIES

Ten years of the UPP produced a story of horror in the health services of Antigua and Barbuda. Mount St John's had no working diagnostic equipment, a scarcity of important drugs and insufficient medical personnel. Many persons died for lack of care, drugs and the absence of specialist attention.

Sadly, the UPP did not care since its Cabinet Ministers all had access to overseas health care.

Today, less than four years later, the situation is vastly improved.

The ABLP government spent more than \$35 million to acquire state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment to deliver first-world health care that residents of our country have a right to expect, and that they deserve.

- From a hospital that could not treat even basic ailments, Mount St John's now:
- conducts kidney transplants;
- implants pacemakers for heart conditions;
- provides both chemotherapy and radiology treatment for cancer patients in partnership with the Cancer Centre;
- provides specialist treatment in a range of services both surgical and otherwise, through arrangements with doctors from the UK;
- sight has been restored for more than 1,500 persons in operations for cataracts and pterygium
- Antigua and Barbuda is also now amongst a few countries in the world that has been validated by the World Health Organisation for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and syphilis.

The ABLP demonstrated its commitment, care and concern for all, especially the poor and the vulnerable who lack the means to get health care. The ABLP put the health and the lives of our people first.



(Modern dialysis machine at Mount St. John's)

7. ABLP ACHIEVED RECORD LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

The ABLP maintained its position that education is the key to open the door of opportunity for all. The Party is aware that, to compete in an increasingly competitive world, Antigua and Barbuda must develop more rapidly as a knowledge-based economy, capable of selling to the world a wide range of services in tourism, information technology, accounting, banking, auditing, actuarial activities, and insurance.

Therefore, in less than four years, the ABLP government has:

- quadrupled scholarships, increasing the aggregate spend to more than \$20 million annually;
- sent almost 1,000 young people on scholarships to schools of higher learning in a range of disciplines;
- expanded the secondary school plant by over 210,000 square feet to include, the construction of the new Sir Novelle Richards Academy that was constructed in the record time of two months and one week;
- firmly established the foundations for locating the fourth landed campus of the University of the West Indies at Five Islands.

Never in the history of Antigua and Barbuda have so many attained the highest levels of education in so short a time.

8. ABLP DELIVERED THE END TO THE UPP WATER DROUGHT

Poor management, lack of planning and malfeasance all contributed to the people of Antigua and Barbuda being deprived of water for household purposes, for sanitation and for growing food. The UPP regime had virtually abandoned its responsibility to supply water and surrendered it to a private company, SEMBCORP Antigua Water Ltd, which was determined to cut off supplies to the entire country, because the UPP administration owed more than \$22 million and offered no repayment plan. The ABLP:

- extinguished SEMBCORP's \$22 million arrears;
- absorbed SEMBCORP into the Antigua Public Utilities authority;
- turned the people of Antigua and Barbuda from debtors into owners;
- invested another \$25 million in reverse osmosis technology and capacity to meet all the country's water needs.
- started the ongoing process of replacing old and defective pipes in the water distribution system to provide all households with reliable water supply in the coming year.



University Campus at Five Islands



Sir Novelle Richards Academy

9. THE ABLP PROVIDED HOMES FOR THE PEOPLE

The ABLP said in its manifesto for the June 2014 general elections that it would provide 500 homes. However, at the time, the full extent of the UPP's maladministration and malfeasance was not clearly known. The situation was much worse than was envisaged. The Treasury was empty, and the demands were plenty.

Nonetheless, amid all the challenges that the ABLP government confronted and overcame, the ABLP has successfully put 360 homes under construction in less than four years at Dredge Bay, Paynters, Lightfoot and Denfieds (Cooks Extension).

We remain determined to fulfil our pledge to construct 200 more homes and even a greater number as we continue to grow the economy.



Housing at Dredge Bay

10. THE ABLP SHOWED ITS RESPECT FOR THE RASTAFARIAN COMMUNITY



The leader of the ABLP, Gaston Browne, in his capacity as Prime Minister, showed the Party's respect for the Rastafarian community as a part of our society when he publicly apologised to them for the actions of intolerance of previous governments. The Rastafarian community can now also legally use cannabis during their religious rituals and ceremonies.

11. THE ABLP MANIFESTED ITS BELIEF IN NOT CRIMINALISING OUR YOUTH OVER POSSESSION OF SMALL AMOUNTS OF MARIJUANA

The ABLP manifested its belief in the worth of our youth and their potential to be quality citizens, contributing to the growth and development of our country when it amended the law to decriminalise possession of small quantities of marijuana. We stopped the process of criminalising young people and making them outcasts with an unnecessary criminal record.



12. THE ABLP EARNED REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESPECT FOR THE NATION

From the very month that the ABLP government was elected to office, it began the task of earning regional and international respect for the nation. Today Antigua and Barbuda can be proud of its global standing.

- Within days of coming into office, the ABLP Government successfully hosted - and Prime Minister Gaston Browne chaired - the Heads of Government Conference of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM);
- The government also inaugurated and hosted a Conference on the Financial challenges facing the Caribbean at which the Deputy Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund fully participated;
 - Antigua and Barbuda chaired the Permanent Council of the Organisation of American States (OAS), launching a programme of financial reform

that pulled the organisation out of bankruptcy;

- Antigua and Barbuda also led an OAS Mission to Haiti that negotiated a settlement to that country's constitutional impasse, including agreement on transitional government, and stopped a conflict that could have caused the loss of thousands of lives;
- Antigua and Barbuda's Prime Minister was elected by CARICOM Heads of Government as the lead spokesman on financial matters to avert a mounting crisis in the banking and financial sector. Antigua and Barbuda represented the region's interests at international and hemispheric meetings;
- In the height of the hurricanes that plagued several countries in the Caribbean in 2017 - and in its aftermath - Antigua and Barbuda played a lead advocacy role at the World Bank/IMF meetings, the United Nations and the Organisation of American States;
- The ABLP Government also proposed and won support for an International Pledging

Conference of donor agencies and countries to give support to hurricane ravaged countries;



- Antigua and Barbuda hosted the first visit by a Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Eastern Caribbean and won his support for a change in the rules that deny concessional financing to middle-income states such as Antigua and Barbuda;
- The ABLP government representatives were also elected to chair important Ministerial Committees of the OAS on Education, of the World Health Organisation, and in international telecommunications. It also holds influential seats on the Boards of the Global Environmental Facility and UNICEF;
- Led by the Prime Minister, Antigua and Barbuda raised aloft the banner of Climate Change and Global warming and the interests of small island states at the International Conferences of the Parties and on other environmental bodies, such as the Global Environmental Fund of which it is a member of the Executive Board;
- In matters of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, such as money laundering, Antigua and Barbuda provided help to several countries including Argentina, Brazil, Panama, Bolivia, the United States, Peru and others. In the investigation into the Odebrecht scandal, the law enforcement authorities of Brazil publicly complemented Antigua and Barbuda for its work;

- The ABLP government welcomed the President of Cuba, Raul Castro, on his first visit to the Eastern Caribbean, on a bilateral visit that produced mutual benefits in tourism, health, agriculture and education;
- The ABLP government also hosted the 6th CUBA-CARICOM Summit and the first time a Foreign Head of State addressed a meeting of the Assembly of OECS Parliamentarians;



- The number of countries with which Antigua and Barbuda enjoys diplomatic relations and visa-free-travel has increased, with benefits in a range of areas, including educational opportunities.
- The nation warmly received two royal visits in 2017: His Royal Highness Prince Charles and Prince Henry of Wales (Harry).



CHAPTER TWO

What the ABLP could not yet do and why.

The new Royalton Hotel, presently under construction.

WHAT THE ABLP COULD NOT YET DO AND WHY

The accomplishments of the ABLP government in less than four years are considerable even though it inherited an empty Treasury

It should be clear for all to see, that had the ABLP government not inherited a financial catastrophe from the UPP that did absolutely nothing to resolve it, the ABLP would not have had to devise creative ways of earning hundreds of millions of dollars to save the economy and grow it as well.

The ABLP Government was forced to prioritize spending, and account has been given for every cent earned and spent. But choices had to be made, and the construction of new roads and highways suffered. The choices were:

- stabilising the economy or repairing roads;
- savings people's lives with better health services or repairing roads;
- building a new airport and sea port to earn money and provide jobs or repairing roads;
- supplying water or repairing roads;
- funding police services to keep the population safe from criminals or repairing roads.

These were choices the ABLP would have preferred not to face, but the cupboard the UPP left was empty and the demands plentiful. Roads suffered, but the ABLP has rolled-out a programme of road and highway construction at a cost of \$250 million that we have begun to implement in the full sight of all.

Now that the economy has been saved and is growing; now that the health system has been vastly improved; now that education for the youth has reached record levels; now that poverty has been curbed and employment increase, roads are being fixed and will continue to be developed as part of our Vision 2023 and Beyond.

CHAPTER THREE

Vision 2023 and Beyond



VISION 2023 AND BEYOND

In under four years, the ABLP government has done the hard work of restructuring our beloved country's economy from ten years of destruction; from three years of over 20 percent negative growth; from an IMF programme for bankrupt countries; from massive debt arrears and debilitating fiscal deficits; from financial sector collapse; from mass unemployment; and from pervasive corruption.

The hard work has been done to remove the dark clouds of doom, gloom and hopelessness. We have erased the deceitful mirage of a bright sunshine Government and exposed the dodgy framework of a trilogy of laws that claimed to embed good governance while maladministration and malfeasance prevailed.

We have replaced the suffocating and pauperizing experience of a shockingly bad, incompetent government, with strong and creative management of our nation's affairs.

In this Manifesto, we have described the conditions of a country teetering on the dark edge of collapse that we inherited in June 2014. We have also given full account of the many ways in which the ABLP Government rescued our country.

In less than four years, we have transformed our nation from failure to economic prosperity; from joblessness to creation of thousands of new jobs; from no growth to the leading Caribbean nation with the highest growth levels over the past three years; from a nation with one of the highest debt to one of the nations where, according to the IMF, "the government's debt to GDP ratio has been declining from very high levels, reflecting sustained fiscal discipline, debt restructuring and a recovery in growth".

Antigua and Barbuda has taken-off. The time has now come to consolidate on our gains to make our country better for good.

Now, we are ready to implement ***Vision 2023 and Beyond*** – the blueprint for advancing our country on all fronts and for the benefit of all in our society without exception.

We set out our vision below in all sectors, knowing all the costs, and from where the money will come to implement them.

GOVERNANCE: COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY



The ABLP is firmly committed to the good governance of our nation's affairs. What does this mean? Accountability is a fundamental requirement of good governance. That is why, the present ABLP Government has established a Special Unit to audit all government contracts and Ministry operations. Under the stewardship of Gaston Browne, there is no opportunity to fleece the resources of the State as happened under the UPP.

Good governance is also transparent government. People should be able to follow and understand the decision-making process. This means that they will be able to clearly see how and why a decision was made – what information, advice and consultation council considered, and which legislative requirements (when relevant) were followed. That is why after every Cabinet meeting, a full account is given to the public, through the media, of all decisions by the Cabinet. Further, at the end of every year, Ministers are required, on live radio and television, to give account for their work and to answer probing questions from the media and the public. Additionally, Prime Minister Gaston Browne appears once-a-week on the radio, providing he is in the country, to answer questions directly from the public. All of this is in addition to Ministers answering questions in Parliament from the Opposition.

Good governance also follows the rule of law. In this regard, the leader of the ABLP and present Prime Minister, Gaston Browne, has not hesitated to act whenever there was any credible information that anyone in government may have been involved in anything untoward, however inadvertently. It is important to note that during the last four years of the ABLP administration, while wild allegations have been made by the political opposition, no corruption scandal has been associated with the government.

Good governance is also responsive. Government should always try to serve the needs of the entire community, while balancing competing interests in a timely, appropriate and responsive manner. That is how the present ABLP Government has operated over the last four years.

As an essential framework of *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, the ABLP Government will adhere to the principles of good governance without fail, upholding the interests of the people of Antigua and Barbuda as the primary obligation and duty.

GOVERNANCE: COMMITMENT TO GOOD GOVERNANCE, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The UPP has been trying to deceive the people of our country into believing that the cost of gasoline at the pumps in Antigua and Barbuda is the most expensive in the Caribbean. Their claims are completely untrue and designed to create animosity towards the ABLP Government. The chart below shows the prices in several Caribbean countries:

February 2018 Regional Retail Prices for Gasoline

Country	Gasoline
St Maarten	\$ 24.87
Barbados	\$ 20.22
Grenada	\$ 15.28
Montserrat	\$ 15.06
Anguilla	\$ 14.64
St Lucia	\$ 12.75
Antigua	\$ 12.50
St Kitts	\$ 12.29
Dominica	\$ 11.86
St Vincent	\$ 11.42

From the evidence, it is clear that our price is far less than six of our neighbours, and only marginally higher than three.

Further, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the rate of inflation in Antigua and Barbuda has been holding steady at just 1.2 percent. Inflation is a sustained increase in the general price level of goods and services in an economy over a period of time. It is clear that at 1.2 per cent, Antigua and Barbuda has done very well over the last four years, and this is reflected, for instance, in the number of motor-cars that people have been able to purchase, the higher income of the Port Authority resulting from purchases by the public of imported goods, and in the businesses that have increased their stock and expanded their sales.

Nonetheless, the ABLP is conscious that for the least well-off in our society, there are certain costs that pose them with challenges. The ABLP has not been – and will not be – neglectful of those persons. That is why we have in place programmes in health and housing to assist them.

Generally, we are aware that the cost of energy needs to be lowered. In this regard, the ABLP has already embarked on a clean-energy programme by which we intend to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy such as solar. This will help to bring down the cost of producing electricity and reduce the price of delivering it to the public.

Further, as part of *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, we intend to reduce the fuel variation charge, thus lowering the cost of electricity per kilowatt to all customers.



With regard to the cost of imported items, the ABLP intends to tackle the fees charged by some agents for clearing goods from the Port. Excessive charges by agents lead to increased costs of goods, straining the pockets of many in our society. Upon our return to office, therefore, the ABLP Government will engage the agents who clear goods at the Port and Airport to arrive at fees that reward them for their work without putting a strain on the public. Our intention is to bring down those costs to a reasonable level.

The ABLP also intends to tackle cost of living issues by giving Public Servants an increase in salaries of 5 percent, without prejudice to the outcome of negotiations that the government will conduct with them. This subject will be tackled fully later in this section of the Manifesto.

Suffice to say here that the ABLP's voluntary decision to increase the salaries of Public Servants by 5 percent, puts them 3.8 per cent ahead of the inflation rate of 1.2 per cent, and is higher than the increases being given in the private sector which has averaged 2 and a half percent.

The ABLP is pledged to continue to keep the cost of living down and to implement the measures set out in our *Vision 2023 and Beyond* to put people's income ahead of inflation.

FIGHTING CRIME - PROTECTING THE PEOPLE

Crime, particularly violent crime will not be tolerated. Our people and our visitors must be able to conduct their social and business lives without fear. Ours must be a society free of crime. Those who prey on people or who think life is cheap, will pay a high price.

There will be no retreat and no relaxation in our war on crime. Therefore, the ABLP will strengthen the following programme which has already started:

When foreigners commit serious crimes, they will be punished according to the law and then deported instantaneously;

- When locals commit serious crimes, they will also be severely punished with longer jail sentences;
- The Police and the Office of National Drug Control Police will be empowered and supported in their efforts to curb crime;
- Police will be provided with vehicles and new smart technology as well as K9 dogs trained to pursue criminals at crime scenes as well as those who try to escape custody;
- Officers in the law enforcement and justice system, who are found to be corrupt, will be shamed, punished and dismissed;
- Witness protection programmes will be enhanced;

Every effort will be made to encourage persons away from crime and to rehabilitate them in the event of crime, but readiness to encourage an end to lawlessness should not be mistaken for weakness. Crime will be dealt with firmly.



Commissioner of Police Wendel Robinson





CONTINUING TO PROVIDE HOUSES FOR THE PEOPLE

Homes are at the heart of all our lives. It is where families are raised, and people feel secure. The ABLP government understands this fact. That is why, before we recognised that the UPP had raided the Treasury and left it empty, we pledged to build 500 homes. Earlier in this Manifesto, we detailed how, despite all the severe challenges, we have still managed to put 360 under construction.

The ABLP makes it clear that we have in no way abandoned our pact with the people. We will build all those homes, and we have gone a considerable way in fulfilling our pledge, despite the massive challenges we had to overcome in the interest of this nation.

As part of *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, through the National Housing and Urban Renewal Company, the government will embark on an urban renewal project to renovate the dilapidated housing stock in St. John's. This will complement the Home Advancement Programme for the Poor & Indigent (HAPPI), which provides housing grants up to \$20,000 per household. Several poor and indigent individuals have already benefitted from this initiative. We plan to expand it.

In addition, two other projects will be realised within the next five years. These are: first, a "Mixed-Income" housing development which will start with \$13.5 million provided by

the Government of Mexico and in which homes will be built for low-income and middle-income families; and the second is a "Rent-to-Own" project in which homes will be built and persons can rent them, with the rental payments going toward the purchase of the property.

The ABLP remains determined to provide quality homes for the people of Antigua and Barbuda on an ongoing basis and at a price within their means.



ENTREPRENUERIAL DEVELOPMENT: WIDENING OWNERSHIP OF OUR ECONOMY

The ABLP's *Vision 2023 and Beyond* envisages widening ownership of our economy to give Antiguan and Barbudans a greater stake. To facilitate this, the ABLP has introduced the Prime Minister's Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP), capitalizing it with \$1 million.

The EDP envisions our people tapping into niche markets, pursuing innovations in technology, capitalizing on the market access made possible by the internet, developing small businesses and offering services and products that are attractive to locals and visitors alike.

Essentially, the programme visualizes our people making use of their talents, innate abilities, artistic and cultural skills, and intellectual capital to create an Antigua and Barbuda brand that becomes known, the world over.

The programme will empanel a group of successful entrepreneurs and other experts from the public and private sectors to review business proposals submitted by would be entrepreneurs, to advise whether the applicant should receive funding and support through the EDP.

In addition to being eligible to receive financing, successful EDP applicants can also:

- Purchase land for their business at a rate of \$3.00 per square foot.
- Receive generous concessions, including tax waivers on the importation of material and capital equipment, and, where applicable, corporate tax holidays.
- Pursue public-private sector partnerships with the Government.

There will also be a venture capital component to the EDP, which will create opportunities for private businesses and publicly owned companies such as WIOC, State Insurance and NAMCO, to invest in businesses developed by young entrepreneurs.

The EDP will be further funded by a telecommunications Tax of 5 cents per minute charge on incoming calls that will be paid by the external source and will not increase the local costs. This will put \$3 million annually into the EDP for disbursement to qualifying persons.

EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH: GIVING THEM A ROLE IN NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING

While the Entrepreneurial Development Programme is not meant for young people only, it is hoped that they will take full advantage of it.

The ABLP is determined to make youth empowerment an important deliverable of Vision 2023 and Beyond.

Our programmes for empowering the youth of Antigua and Barbuda is not limited to the opportunities that the EDP will provide, it also opens the benefits of education and access to lands and home ownership.

Through the Prime Minister's Scholarship Fund, the ABLP Government has already provided over \$20 million annually for young people to pursue studies in countries across the globe. Today, there are over 1,000 Antiguan and Barbudans pursuing their dreams of higher education.

In addition, ABLP Government created the National Student Loan Fund which provides very concessional loans to Antiguan and Barbudan students to pursue tertiary or specialized training, or certification at local, regional and international institutions. This Student Loan Fund has provided a total of \$21.6 million in loans to 814 students. Together, the Scholarship Fund and the Student Loan Fund are making a positive contribution to building the human capital of Antigua and Barbuda.

The ABLP also intends to revive our "Land for Youth Programme" that the UPP callously discarded. This programme forms part of the general land distribution initiative envisaged in our Vision 2023 and Beyond.

Additionally, the ABLP pledges to include at every general election, as we have done for this one, a person under the age of 30 as a candidate. The views of the young must be heard in the Councils of our country and they must participate in decision-making at the highest levels.



(Land clearance for distribution at Friar's Hill)

LAND DISTRIBUTION: SECURITY ON THE ROCK

The ABLP's ***Vision 2023 and Beyond*** wants to give more people a stake in our country by allowing them to buy 'a piece of the rock' and to feel secure in their own homeland.

Land Sales at low Prices:

A new ABLP Government will:

- embark on an extensive land distribution initiative at a developmental rate as low as \$3.00 per square foot;
- encourage residential and commercial development, by selling lands at Friars Hill at \$6 per square foot with infrastructure. In anticipation of this, lands have already being cleared and subdivided in that area;
- promote residential development in Royals, by selling choice crown lands at \$6 per square foot with infrastructure.
- Sell land in Jennings, Piccadilly, and Montrula.
- Implement a special programme for young people between the ages of 18 and 35

years, who do not yet own a piece of the rock, to give them preferred access to land ownership at Donovan's, Gunthropes, Pares and other areas.

- continue a process through the National Housing Corporation of selling 80 parcels of land at Donovans at a price of \$4 per square foot with infrastructure.

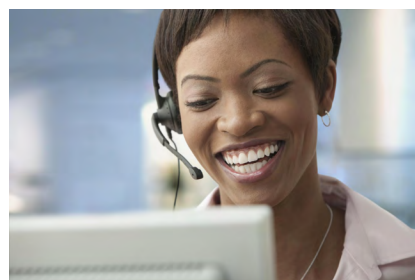
None of these lands are for those who are seeking to purchase crown lands for speculative purposes; they are for the specific purpose of giving deserving citizens ownership and empowerment.

Sale of Land to Persons who have Squatted for 10 years or more: The ABLP Government will also sell land to persons, who have been squatting on government-owned land on the mainland of Antigua, for 10 years or more at \$1.00 per square foot up to a quarter of an acre. This will not only empower persons who are among the least well-off in our society, it will end the stigma of illegality.

The ABLP is determined to give Antiguan and Barbudans a firm stake in our country through land ownership.



JOB CREATION AND REAL INVESTMENTS



The ABLP Government has already reduced unemployment from the near 30% left by the UPP. But the Party accepts that more jobs need to be created, especially for our school leavers.

The investments that the ABLP Government has rolled-out, contracted and mobilised will come to fruition in the coming period, creating more jobs for all who are willing to work.



PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENTS AND INCREASED EMPLOYMENT

Private Sector Investments that are already obvious are:

- * The Calvin Ayre \$67 million Informatics Centre at Woods Estate;
- * Sunwing's \$202 million renovation and expansion of the Royal Antigua Resort. This project that will add 350 rooms and provide 700 jobs for our citizens and residents.

- * The Callaloo Cay project that will become the home of Antigua's Waldorf Hotel. Construction has already started at Morris Bay on this US\$120 million luxury hotel. This will be a 120-room property, that will generate jobs for 500 persons during construction and 500 jobs once the hotel is operational.



(Artist's impression of Antigua's Waldorf Hotel at Callaloo Cay)

- * The upgrading of the Jolly Beach Hotel;
- * The expansion of Nonsuch Bay, Tamarind Hills and Veranda Hotels;

- * At Half Moon Bay, the ABLP government has paid down the debt of US\$48 million to under US\$20 million, and the Replay Group, has begun demolition of the derelict structure and will begin construction of a new hotel by the third quarter of 2018, bringing jobs immediately and more jobs and revenue on completion well into the future.

- * The YIDA project at Crabbes has started, with \$324 million invested thus far on land acquisition, land development, infrastructure, a concrete plant, a steel fabrication factory, equipment, staff housing and amenities.



(Site of the Paradise Found Resort on Barbuda)

Additionally, the following private sector projects are already in the pipeline, funds have been committed, and start dates have been set. They include:

Royalton Hotel on the north side of the lagoon and opposite the Royal Antiguan, that will start in 2018/2019. It will be a 350-room property constructed at a cost of \$400 million. Approximately 800 jobs will be created because of this project.

- The Marriott Autograph Hotel will be a 100-room resort on the site where the Yeptons Villas once stood. This will be a \$150 million project that is expected to create 250 jobs.
- The Valley Church Beach Hotel will be a 250-room resort constructed at a cost of \$270 million by Calvin Ayre.
- The Courtyard Marriot Hotel at the V C Bird International Airport.
- In Barbuda, the Paradise Found project, by Robert De Nero will be a property developed at a cost of \$675 million, and the PLH Hotel project by John Paul DeJoria, will also with an investment of \$540 million.

Taken together new private sector investments in the tourism sector will increase our room stock by over 1,500 rooms and add provide hundreds of jobs.



(Royal Antigua Hotel under construction)

PUBLIC-SECTOR INVESTMENTS WHICH ARE ALREADY NEARING REALISATION INCLUDE:

The St. John's Port Modernization project. At a value of \$243 million, this is the single largest public-sector investment undertaken by any government, facilitating the transformation of the commercial facility into a regional trans-shipment port, creating jobs and earning significant revenues;

- A fifth Tourism Berth at Point Wharf: \$80 million will be invested in 2018, to construct a fifth Tourism berth, at Point Wharf, to accommodate the Oasis class ships, in time for the 2018/2019 cruise tourism season. This will bring greater incomes for existing taxis, buses, vendors and businesses, and it will also create more jobs.

- The National Assets Management Company Limited (NAMCO) will invest in the development of a \$30 million project at Fort James, that will broaden the range of leisure and entertainment products we offer as a destination. Its main attraction will be a water and theme park for the enjoyment of visitors and locals. A small marina, bed and breakfast hotel, shops and restaurants and a night club,

are all part of the vision for a revitalized Fort James area.

- The entire road network will be repaired and expanded. This work includes main roads, arterial roads. \$250 million will be invested by the Government in 2018 alone to rebuild the road infrastructure and expand the road network. This work has already begun and is plain for all to see.
- Drains and sidewalks will also be built alongside the road expansion programme over the next five years.

The West Indies Oil Company will continue to expand in the following ways:

* \$45 million will be invested in the tank farms in 2018.

* \$9 million will be spent in the period 2018-2019 to triple storage capacity for Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) from the current 120,000 USG to 360,000 USG. This investment will increase the supply security for LPG, support growth in the commercial sector, i.e., hotels, restaurant and bakeries.

* The terminal equipment and facilities will be modernised at a cost of \$12 million. Capital expenditure will be incurred on pumps, pipelines and fire suppression systems in the terminal at Friars Hill Road.

*In the 2019-2021 period, the pipeline to the airport for jet fuel will be replaced at a cost of \$15 million. Storage for jet fuel will also be increased by an additional 500,000 barrels for long term revenue growth investment at an estimated cost of \$50 million.

*For the benefit of the public generally, WIOC's service stations will be refurbished and modernised at a cost of \$12 million.

These developments by WIOC will circulate a great deal of money in the economy, provide additional employment and provide government with revenues (in taxes and dividends) of \$13.5 million in 2018; \$15.25 million in 2019; and \$16.6 million.

- Improvement of the YASCO track: this will be done with the assistance of the Pan American Sports Organization, which will invest \$4.8 million in this project.
- Knuckle Block Project: this \$18 million project will see the transformation of a derelict site into a community centre and indoor basketball facility for the benefit of all members of the Grays Farm-Greenbay community

The ABLP makes no idle promises. We seek no easy propaganda victories. The investments we identify are solid as a rock. Our pledges are real, consequential and transformational. We say what we mean and do as we say. The ABLP's ***Vision 2023 and Beyond*** will unleash internally generated organic growth, in our national economy, never seen in the history of Antigua and Barbuda



(Knuckle Block Under Construction)



Shell Beach will be open for local investment

OPENING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER LOCAL PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM

Linked to the considerable investments identified in the section above, the ABLP Government as part of its ***Vision 2023 and Beyond***, will open lands at Shell Beach and other areas for locals to open Air Bed and Breakfast (ABnB) accommodation that has become popular globally as an enhancement of the tourism industry.

The ABLP will sell land at concessionary rates to locals for the specific purpose of constructing and operating Air BnB accommodation. The objective is to further empower

local people and give them a stake in the vital tourism industry. Further, the ABLP Government will explore how locals can best partner with the Citizenship by Investment Programme by encouraging successful applicants to invest in the Air BnB operations in which locals will be the majority shareholders. This will provide an additional source of capital for locals.

The Government will also encourage locals to form themselves into cooperatives

or partnerships in which they could pool their resources to take ownership of an important sector of the economy and profit from it. An example of this is the highly successful Falmouth Harbour Marina which was started – and continues to operate – as a partnership between locals. Those pioneers proved it can be done.

The ABLP Government will facilitate local ownership; we encourage locals to seize the opportunities.



AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT: SAVING AND MAKING MONEY

Agriculture has become one of the fastest growing sectors in our economy.

Farmers have increased production to record levels because of the ABLP administration’s National Food Security Program which is aimed at making Antigua and Barbuda self-sufficient in several staple food products.

A new Labour Party administration will pursue a strategy that will provide entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture and fisheries. Our aim is fourfold:

- * To achieve as high a level of food security as possible, by reducing dependence on imported food;
- * To save foreign exchange the country now spends on the importation of food;
- * To develop a reliable supply chain for hotels and supermarkets;
- * To promote entrepreneurship in farming and fisheries so that agriculture becomes a money-making and profitable business.

The public will rightly ask: how does an ABLP government plan to accomplish these aims in a country that has traditionally suffered from droughts, where water supply has been unreliable and where agriculture has only existed at a subsistence level?

The answers have been carefully considered and encouraged by the resilience our farmers showed despite severe drought conditions over the last four years. To help them the ABLP Government

ensured that they had access to water. The result was that many farmers increased production of staple food crops at record levels.

The answers, therefore, are:

First, to set water delivery as a top priority, and the ABLP Government has done so, ensuring that enough desalination reverse osmosis plants are installed to meet domestic, tourism and agriculture demands. By March 2019, the ABLP Government aims to deliver 300,000 gallons of water per day to farmers.



(Producing water from desalination)

Second, we have identified increased production of staple food products such as chicken, pork, eggs, onions, sweet potato, butternut squash, pumpkin, and carrots. Production will be done through by an entrepreneurial partnership in which government will provide:

- long term leases of farm lands to individual farmers or a cooperative of them;
- financial support through the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank or the Entrepreneurial Development Fund;
- expertise in seed production for crops and to increase production of the Antigua black pineapple and the introduction of new varieties using high level scientific methods; and
- Technical assistance to farmers to revive the citrus and coconut industries.



Third, the People’s Republic of China will invest \$8 million, to help to expand our capacity to utilize smart greenhouse and open-field production methods to increase agricultural output.

Fourth, in chicken production, within the first three years the ABLP government will ensure that at least 40% of our national chicken consumption is locally produced at competitive prices. The government will team up with the Poultry Farmers Association. In the production of pork and pork products, the ABLP government will employ a similar strategy of working with pig farmers and the Livestock Association to increase production.

The Fishing Industry: This industry will continue to receive strong support especially in marketing and processing of fish and other seafood products. Loans and technical assistance will also be provided. All the tax and duty-free concessions now applied to the fishing industry will continue.



(Medical Marijuana Being produced in factory conditions)

ELECTRICITY: REDUCING THE COST TO BUSINESSES AND HOMES

Over the last four years, the ABLP Government tackled many of the challenges that impact electricity generation and delivery, including resolving the judgment debt claim, of \$221 million to Antigua Power Company – a legacy of the UPP administration – already described in this Manifesto. Among the many actions taken was refurbishment of the 69 kVA grid network which has improved the reliability of service.

The issue now is to stabilise electricity supply and to do so at an affordable price.

Therefore, the ABLP Government will ensure that APUA expands the use of solar photovoltaic and wind energy plants will be expanded. This

will be combined with a wind and solar plant costing \$40 million that will be commissioned in 2018 with financing already pledged by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development. So, this is no pie-in-the-sky promise. This will help to bring down the cost of producing electricity and reduce the price of delivering it to the public.

APUA has already started a retrofitting project at a cost of \$21.3 million that will provide better street lighting across Antigua and Barbuda. The project reflects the strategy of Vision 2023 and Beyond to decrease energy consumption in the public sector and to reduce carbon emissions. Currently, street lighting service consumes around 9,700 megawatt hours annually and represents

about 21 percent of the total electricity consumption of the Government.

Under this project, the APUA will be replacing 14,365 existing street lamps with LED lamps. Four hundred and fifty of these LED lamps will be installed in Barbuda. Again, this is no empty electioneering promise. The money is in place with \$18.9 million being provided through the Caribbean Development Bank and \$2.4 million from the Government.

Further, as part of *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, we will consider ways to reduce the fuel variation charge, to lower further the cost of electricity per kilowatt to businesses and to homes.

MARIJUANA FOR MEDICINAL PURPOSES

The medical benefits of marijuana (cannabis) have long been known. It is an essential ingredient in many medicines now taken universally. For example, it has been proven to be beneficial for treating glaucoma and curbing blindness; it may help reverse the carcinogenic effects of tobacco and improve lung health; and it can be used to prevent epileptic seizures. Recent medical studies also show that a chemical found in marijuana stops cancer from spreading, slows the progression of Alzheimer’s disease and eases the pain of multiple sclerosis and arthritis. Importantly, for persons of African descent, it

has been proven to improve the symptoms of Lupus, an autoimmune disorder.

Medical marijuana production is now dominated by Canada and the United States. Worldwide legal sales reached US\$7.7 billion in 2017, of which US\$7 billion came from the U.S. and about US\$600 million from Canada. A leading international market research firm, Brightfield Group, projects that the global total will soar to US\$31 billion by 2021.

Given the medicinal benefits of marijuana, the ABLP Government will examine the best, safest

and regulated way in which marijuana could be legalised for medicinal purposes locally. We will do so in collaboration with the Government of St. Vincent and The Grenadines which is also contemplating similar action.

The ABLP Government will also explore with existing and experienced companies in Canada how Antigua and Barbuda might participate in the production and supply to them of marijuana under strictly supervised and secure circumstances and in keeping with international law.



DELIVERING SUPERFAST BROADBAND: OPENING-UP THE WORLD

No country can become an economic powerhouse without modern high-speed data and voice communication and internet services. The ABLP is well aware of this truth. That is why we have invested in e-government and why Antigua and Barbuda is today the leading country in the 15-nation Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in electronic government services.

We know we have a farther way to go, and we intend to advance swiftly not only in e-government, but in the provision of superfast broadband for all, particularly banks, the Medical Universities now on our shores, our own Mount St. John's Medical Centre, tourism marketing and promotion, and to open-up the world to our creative young people to sell ideas and services globally.

We are also aware that the present generation of young people are internet and computer savvy in an unprecedented way and

they are keen to utilise super broadband to explore business opportunities.

That is why APUA has laid down high speed fibre optic cables and why a new 5G network has already been designed for installation. It is also why we have identified important submarine communication cables and reduced the cost of broadband internet provided by APUA to \$75.00 per month for 10 megabits per second - the best price in the Eastern Caribbean.

Vision 2023 and Beyond envisages the investment of \$270 million in a joint venture between APUA (Telecoms) and other telecoms companies, including small local operators in Antigua and Barbuda, to deliver the Superfast Broadband that will catapult us ahead of the Caribbean.

Our people, our professionals, our small business, our medical specialists, our entrepreneur

and IT specialists, our offshore sectors and Tourism and education sectors, crime fighting and security, as well as competitiveness and growth will be greatly facilitated by this development.

Further, we will be able to attract new investment from companies, including global accounting firms and telemarketing companies, that wish to use our competitive tax base, our computer-literate young people, and broadband to conduct business worldwide.

Communications and internet-based business provides the most lucrative platform for enterprise development and new wealth creation and enhancement.

The ABLP is determined that Antigua and Barbuda will occupy a meaningful and competitive place for the provision of Information Technology Services in the world.



INVESTMENTS, JOB CREATION IN SUMMARY

Economic Growth and job creation will be unparalleled: These and other investments will result in an unprecedented level of growth. Economic Growth in 2018 is projected to exceed \$400 million. This would be the strongest, real, organic growth in the history of the country that was not driven by an external event, such as Cricket World Cup.

The people of Antigua and Barbuda can expect sustainable economic performance once again that will make the country better for good.

TAXES, INDIVIDUALS AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Underlying the ABLP's *Vision 2023 and Beyond* is our stated goal of making Antigua and Barbuda an economic powerhouse in the Caribbean. To achieve this, we know that neither the individual nor businesses must be burdened with heavy taxes. That is why we pledge:

No Personal Income Tax:

The ABLP remains committed to the view that the income of the individual is best left in his/her pocket to spend or save as he/she considers prudent. Persons can use income to buy land, build homes, care for the needs of their children, contribute to the welfare of their elderly, buy or replace their motor-cars, save for bigger projects or for comfort in their older years.

Additionally, there are two further benefits to no personal income tax. First, people will spend more in the economy and so cause businesses to be sustained and expanded, including by employing more staff. Second, businesses around the world would be encouraged to establish Headquarters and back office operations in Antigua and Barbuda, because of the absence of Personal Income Tax for staff.

Lowering Corporate Tax to 20%:

The Donald Trump administration in the United States has lowered Corporate Tax to a flat rate of 21 per cent; the United Kingdom has dropped its Corporate Tax rate to 19 per cent. The ABLP Government will lower the

Corporate Tax rate from the present rate of 25 percent to 20 per cent. We believe that the principal advantage in this is the attraction of Headquarter Companies and back-office operations from around the world that would take advantage of the competitive tax rate and so create good quality jobs and a knock-on effect for the economy in the provision of goods and services to those entities. We also believe that it might spur local companies to pay their taxes so that less resources have to be spent on collection and enforcement. Therefore, within the next three years, the ABLP commits to lower the corporate tax rate to 20 percent.

CITIZENSHIP BY INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Citizenship by Investment Programme (CIP) remains important to the economy of Antigua and Barbuda. Proceeds from the CIP have been used: to help purchase equipment for the Mount St. John's Medical Centre for treating cancer patients; to assist with the funding of scholarships; to help the Social Security Scheme to meet shortfalls in payment to pensioners; to assist the Barbuda Council with payments to staff and suppliers; and to support Carnival and many other cultural activities.

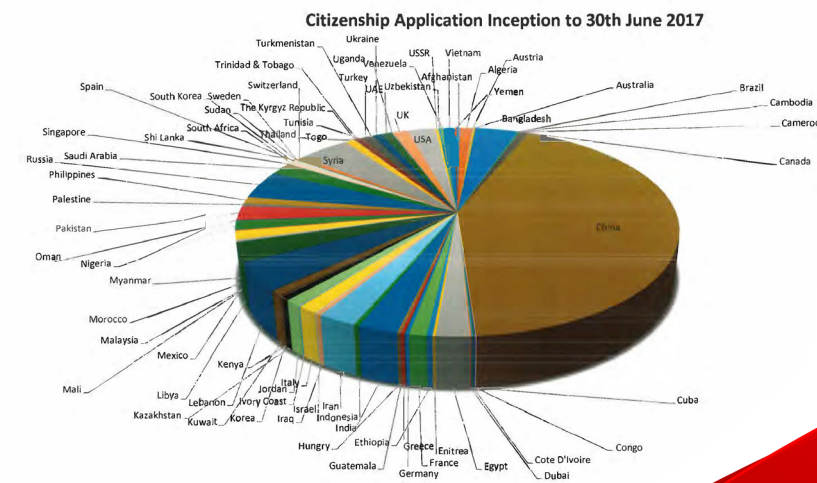
Therefore, the ABLP is committed to ensuring that the CIP continues to flourish, producing a steady stream of revenues for the benefit of all the people of Antigua and Barbuda. In this regard, as part of **Vision 2023 and Beyond**, the ABLP Government will:

- Maintain the international competitiveness of the CIP in the global market by upholding the integrity and standing of our passports;
- Fulfil our obligations to the people of Antigua and Barbuda and the international community by ensuring that successful applicants for citizenship are persons who have been thoroughly vetted, including by

the International Police Organisation. The ABLP Government is unrelenting, in its commitment to ensure that no persons of dubious character, or over whom any cloud of suspicion hangs, has any chance of being granted Citizenship and a passport;

- Intensify our marketing and promotional efforts to keep Antigua and Barbuda as a premier location for investments by high-worth persons seeking second citizenships;
- Ensure that the operations of the CIP are fully transparent and that there is complete audited accountability of its proceeds. In this regard, the CIP Unit already produces an independently audited report every six months, detailing the number of successful applicants; their countries of origin; the monies received and details of every cent spent. The ABLP will continuously review and improve the operations and accountability of the Programme.

Number of Citizenship Applications received under the Programme by Country of Birth Inception to 30th June 2017



WHOLESALE BANKING: EXPANDING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Another reason for lowering our corporate tax rate to 20 per cent is that the European Union (EU) countries are compelling jurisdictions, such as Antigua and Barbuda, not to have low tax rates for corporations, including banks, in the international financial sector.

The ABLP introduced the offshore sector in 1982. Since then, the international environment has changed dramatically. It is clear that the present model of international financial services will not survive because of the hostility of larger countries. It is now necessary to restructure the concept and purpose of the sector by making it part of the national financial landscape.

Indeed, the Commission of the EU has given jurisdictions, such as ours, a year in which to stop ring-fencing of our offshore sector. Therefore, the ABLP Government will amend the International Banking Act 2016 to introduce a new form of banking license under the Financial Services Regulatory Commission (FSRC) in association with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB).

The concept we will introduce is based on the model used in Singapore for "Wholesale Banking". A Wholesale Bank will be licensed to conduct certain activities in local currency with

citizens, but not compete with local retail banks by issuing savings accounts. However, it will pay the same rate of corporate tax as local corporations, i.e., 20 percent.

The Wholesale Bank will be able to offer non-interest-bearing current accounts in local currency and offer long-term interest-bearing fixed deposits. The scope of the new license will include the provision of services between banks, and services to organizations such as government entities/agencies, mortgage brokers, corporate clients, mid-sized companies, real estate developers and investors, international financial and foreign exchange services, trade finance businesses, institutional customers (such as pension funds) and investment services dealing with bonds, securities, commodities and digital assets.

This means that the amount of money for borrowing by the productive sectors of our economy will be enlarged, thus boosting economic activity, and the shortfall from lowering the corporate tax rate for local companies to 20 percent will be made up by the taxes paid by the Wholesale Banks.

INTRODUCING BLOCKCHAIN TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE OUR NATION COMPETITIVE



The new ABLP Government will introduce legislation to operate and regulate Blockchain Technology as an integral part of ***Vision 2023 and Beyond***. This technology will leapfrog our nation into digital transactions of the 21st Century and ready us for the next.

The practical benefits of Blockchain Technology is that, for the first time, transfers of property, such as money, land, shares and ownership title, is guaranteed to be safe and secure because such transfers are recorded digitally and permanently and no one can challenge the legitimacy of the transfer. The benefits of this technology are immense.

As an example, its introduction will greatly assist our country to end de-risking and withdrawal of Correspondent Banking Relations from our financial institutions

by global banks in the US and the UK, because Blockchain Technology will record every transaction digitally, permanently and openly, allowing for immediate tracking, giving greater comfort to all financial institutions.

Beyond this, the operation of Blockchain Technology will allow companies, banks and other financial institutions to offer services to the world for global transactions such as buying and selling shares in companies or on stock markets, and transferring ownership of assets.

Within Antigua and Barbuda, Blockchain Technology can also be used to accelerate the registration of land purchases and title; to pay taxes, including property taxes in a secure and recorded manner; and to pay bills in a transparent, traceable and indisputable ways.

The introduction and regulation of Blockchain Technology gives Antigua and Barbuda another platform to offer services globally and locally through companies located in our country that employ local people and contribute to the growth of the economy. We will be among the first of Caribbean countries to become globally competitive in the provision of Blockchain-based services.



LINKING TAX BREAKS TO SUPPORTING ARTISTS

To encourage local artists to find outlets for their work beyond tourists to the country, the ABLP Government will introduce a system in which local businesses can claim a percentage of the cost of purchasing art work for their establishments against their taxes.

TAX BREAKS AND ENHANCING PROPERTIES IN ST JOHN'S

There are many properties in St. John's - the first view of our country that visitors see - that sorely need enhancement. To encourage property owners to improve their buildings, the ABLP Government will introduce arrangements by which 25 percent of a verifiable sum of \$50,000 or more, spent over a 12-month period, can be claimed against payable taxes. In other words, the ABLP Government will participate financially with property owners to upgrade their buildings and, at the same time, enhance the appearance of St. John's.

REGISTERING LAND OWNERSHIP AND IMPROVING HOMES BRING TAX RELIEF

There are several persons who have not registered their ownership of land and houses for tax purposes. This is not in their interest, for whenever the land or house comes to be sold or inherited, the ownership of the property will become known and the back taxes will have to be paid according to the law. They may end-up forfeiting the property to pay the taxes.

The ABLP will give a 9-month amnesty to all citizens of Antigua and Barbuda who have not registered their property ownership to do so. Depending on a means test, they will be given relief for up to 100 per cent of the taxes owed, provided they register their properties within the amnesty period and pay all future taxes.

Additionally, the ABLP will give relief of 1 percent on property taxes to any house owner who upgrades and improves their property in a tax year, over the next five-year period. Our objective is to improve and enhance the housing stock across the country and restore the community pride that was a tradition in our villages.

REPAYING OUR PUBLIC SERVANTS

The ABLP is deeply conscious that public sector workers had to shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden associated with the economic and financial downturn that affected our nation under the UPP.

Never was public servants' commitment to service more tested than over the past decade. The ABLP would have liked to repay the public servants for their duty, their patience and their diligence throughout that difficult decade, but we found severe fiscal constraints that have been described in this Manifesto.

But that situation must now end. Obligations to public servants must be met to the best of the Government's ability.

As a strong indication of its firm intention, the present ABLP government announced that, given that the negotiation process between the unions and the Government's team will take some time, the Government has decided to pay an interim increase of five percent of basic salary for public servants that was effective January 1st this year, without prejudice to the outcome of negotiations.



Additionally, as part of its *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, in which the ABLP expects public servants to play a full part, we undertake to support public servants through a number of special programmes and initiatives, including:

- i. Housing Grant: A \$10,000 grant for public servants to assist with the down payment on the purchase price of a home from National Housing and Urban Renewal Company.
- ii. Vehicle Concessions: once every five years, beginning this year, public servants will receive waiver of between 50 to 100 percent waiver of import duty on new and used vehicles.
- iii. Home Ownership: priority access to homes, provided through National Housing, will be given to Teachers, Nurses, members of the Antigua Barbuda Defence Force, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda. For those who do not wish to purchase a home from National Housing, a special window will be established through the Construct Antigua Barbuda Initiative

that will allow fast-track access to the incentives offered through this programme.

Additionally, public servants will be eligible to receive concessions on the importation of household furnishings and major appliances to furnish their new homes.

iv. Health Insurance: The ABLP Government will commission a study to establish the feasibility of a group health insurance plan for public sector employees. Participation in the plan will be optional with the premium being paid by the employee and the Government.

The ABLP is determined to do right to the public servants of our nation and to repay them for their patience, duty and hard work during the years of neglect by the UPP.





EDUCATION: A RIGHT NOT A PRIVILEGE

Education has been at the heart of the ABLP's work from its inception in 1946 and before that when its leaders were also the stalwarts of the Labour movement that stood up for workers' rights.

The ABLP has always known that education is what empowers people and allows them to improve their economic circumstances and to realise their full potential. Education is a right, not a privilege.

When educational opportunities are withheld from individuals, not only do they fall back but so does the country as a whole. That is why the ABLP, as part of *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, is resolved to place education at the front and centre of the policies of a new Government.

At the very beginning of this Manifesto, we asserted that the ABLP believes: "In the inborn worth of the individual as one of the richest assets of our nation" and "In training and educating our people to own, to manage and to hold decision-making positions in all areas of our society".

That is why, over the last four years, the ABLP Government focussed on increasing the value of our human capital, through higher education and technical and professional skills training. In 2017 alone the ABLP Government added 210,000 square feet, to the stock of infrastructure available for the delivery of secondary schooling in Antigua. We built a new secondary school, the Sir Novelle Richards Academy, which accommodates 151 students.

In addition to the new school, the Government spent significant sums to expand many secondary schools, including: Antigua Girls High School, Clare Hall Secondary School, Jennings Secondary School, All Saints Secondary School and Princess Margaret secondary School.

Further, the ABLP government spent over \$20 million on scholarships educating our people at university and technical college level. We put human capital first.

Vision 2023 and Beyond will see the University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus opened to students, broadening opportunities for our people to pursue tertiary education and lifelong learning. Significantly, a Law School will be part of the University, allowing our people and persons from other OECS countries to study law without having to contend with space restraints in Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad.

Apart from the UWI campus, the ABLP Government also intends to:

- Build another secondary school to allow for smaller classrooms and more attention to each student;
- Rehabilitate and reconstruct several secondary, primary and pre-school facilities with funding from the CDB through the second Basic Education Project and the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Loan. Extensive work will be done to the St. Mary's Secondary School, Irene B Williams School, Sir McChesney George Secondary School, Holy Trinity Primary School, Toddler's Paradise Day Care and Codey Kelly Pre-School.
- Continue targeted repairs and maintenance programmes, started over the last four years, to ensure the general upkeep of all school plants.
- Improve the security of school plants and the protection of students and teachers.

FREE SCHOOL BUS TRAVEL FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN: From the September 2018 term, the ABLP Government will make travel on school buses for school children completely free

All the investments made in education to date, and the investments that are to come, will help to create a human resource pool in Antigua and Barbuda that is well educated, highly skilled and constantly seeking knowledge.

A COMPUTER FOR EVERY GOVERNMENT TEACHER: As part of **Vision 2023 and Beyond** and to enhance the capacity of teachers to access learning information and research for the benefit of their students, the ABLP Government will provide every teacher in government schools with a lap top computer or a Tablet from September 2018. These computers will be reviewed every two years for replacement or upgrading.

In one generation, our people must be able to move from the lowest education and economic rung, to the commanding heights of professional and income levels of our nation. This is a noble and vital cause in the interest of our young people and in the interest of our nation.

SPORTS, CULTURE AND THE ARTS: BRANDING OUR NATION GLOBALLY

Sports has helped to brand our nation for quality, grit, and high performance globally.

Of course, Cricket is where we first put the Antigua and Barbuda brand masterly on display through the cricketing Knights, Sir Vivian Richards, Sir Andy Roberts, Sir Curtley Ambrose and Sir Richie Richardson.

Now our country has showed its brand again in Rowing for two consecutive years in the Talisker Cross-Atlantic Challenge. Our most recent team not only came second, defeating representatives of countries as large and well-resourced as the United States, but they broke world records and carved for themselves and our nation a place in history.

We also have two new talents to show-off to the world. Fifteen-year-old Tiger Tyson who made history by qualifying in first position for the sport of Kiteboarding and who will represent our nation at the Youth Olympic Games in Argentina later this year, and Alston Ryan who will go to the Commonwealth games to compete in Welterweight boxing.

In 2018, we will host the Semi-Finals and Finals of the ICC Women's T-20 World Cup Finals. Again, the Sir Viv Richards National Stadium and our entire nation, will be showcased before millions of cricket fans across the globe.

As part of our **Vision 2023 and Beyond**, the ABLP will continue to create an enabling environment for sports development, by upgrading community sporting facilities, employing additional coaches, and expanding the range of services and support provided to our athletes.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS:

The music and film industries offer opportunities for developing and exposing Antigua and Barbuda talent worldwide. In pursuit of this, the ABLP undertakes the following:

- We will establish fully-equipped recording studios at strategic points in the country so that our existing and budding musicians can record their work for marketing locally, regionally and internationally.
- We will also promote the film industry locally and seek to attract Hollywood and Bollywood film makers to make films in Antigua and Barbuda, and to take advantage of our competitive tax environment to do final editing and production work here, giving our local film producers the benefit of working with them and developing their own skills.



Sir Vivian Richards



Tiger Tyson

The ABLP appreciates that music and films are global goods, appreciated by global audiences and that opportunities exist in today's technological world more than they ever have before. It is time to take advantage of it.

During the next five years, the ABLP is also determined to convert the historic Antigua Recreation Ground into an Academy and Cultural centre for Cricket. The Academy will become the training ground for future cricket heroes and icons, and the Museum will celebrate the achievements of our cricketers and all others who performed outstandingly at this famous ground. It will be open to tourists as one of the truly meaningful heritage sites on Antigua.



Victorious Rowers of the Talisker Cross-Atlantic Challenge.



Alzari Joseph

BUILDING A MORE EQUAL SOCIETY

The ABLP is the party of equality. We have strived from our inception to build a society in which the rights of all are respected and in which there is a meaningful place for all.

WOMEN: The ABLP Government will strengthen legislation and punishments for violence against women. Women are our mothers and our wives. They are also the equals of men. The ABLP insists that women should be respected and that violence against them should end. At the same time, where instances of women-initiated violence occur, this too will be discouraged under the law.

Under *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, women will be guaranteed equal pay for equal tasks; the right to promotion and equal opportunity to assume the highest offices in all sectors of our society. The ABLP will also put machinery in place to end unlawful maternity and pregnancy discrimination in the workplace.

ENDING CHILD ABUSE: Every case of child abuse is a case too many. Abuse of children scars them for life and affects their capacity to learn and to cope in society. Such abuse must end. Discipline is necessary, reprimanding a child that has misbehaved is correct, insisting on respect for elders and non-violent behaviour toward their peers is encouraged, but abuse must end. In this regard, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Transformation will be instructed by the new ABLP Government to commission an expert study on how schools, churches, and community-based organisations can collaborate to devise and implement a programme, including legislation, to end child abuse and promote the socialisation of children in an environment of care, responsibility and good behaviour.

DIFFERENTLY ABLED PEOPLE: As an economy grows, it is imperative that all segments of the economy share in the fruit of that growth. This is why the ABLP will work proactively

to tackle discrimination, remove barriers and deliver dignity and empowerment not isolation and stigma to our differently abled people. We pledge to work with the Churches and non-governmental organisations to better target those who need assistance but remain outside the social safety net.

The ABLP Government has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and will take the appropriate steps, in collaboration with the Association of Persons with Disabilities, to ensure implementation of policies and plans that effectively integrate persons with physical and intellectual disabilities into society.

PENSIONERS:

Pensioners have roles to play in our economy as it continues to grow. They have knowledge and experience that are invaluable. In *Vision 2023 and Beyond*, the ABLP Government will explore ways in which pensioners can be utilised on a part-time and paid basis to share their knowledge either by teaching or by sharing experiences in schools and at seminars in work place and in the field.

The present ABLP government has put an end to the UPP years of paying pensioners late. It has also agreed to the gradual increase in the pension age from 60 years to 65 years in recognition that people now live longer and remain capable of sterling work. The ABLP pledges to pursue policies that will strengthen the Social Security system, to secure its future viability and ensure it can meet its obligations to beneficiaries when they become due.

The ABLP believes that it is prejudice that disables people; not their physical situation. We are convinced that, given the right environment and the opportunities, all our people can uplift themselves and contribute to our national growth. We are resolved to create the environment and the opportunities.

GREENING AND BEAUTIFYING OF OUR COUNTRY

Antigua and Barbuda has had a tradition of beautifying the neighbourhoods in which we live. In some areas that tradition has slipped away. It is time that we revive it so that we can instil pride in our country as a whole.

This will be to our own benefit. A clean, beautiful environment enhances the value of property and makes neighbourhoods desirable in which to live. It benefits us in another very important way – it delivers a country that is green, clean and attractive to tourists. In other words, the very state of our country becomes a reason for tourists to admire it, recommend it to others and want to come back repeatedly.

Therefore, the ABLP Government will itself begin a country-wide tree planting programme and we will encourage the private sector and individuals generally to plant trees as well. We will:

- Encourage the private sector to contribute trees to supplement the Government's tree planting and greening nation-wide programme;
- Urge the private sector to sponsor the maintenance of trees and greening on sections of our main roadways;
- Introduce an annual Constituency competition in tree planting, greening and beautification. The winners in three categories will be rewarded with the provision of greater government resources in areas that the community identifies.

Beautifying Antigua and Barbuda is a national responsibility that the ABLP will promote, facilitate and implement to make our country attractive to all who live within its shores and all who visit.



A NEW AND MODERN CEMETERY

The way in which, as a society, we say farewell to our loved ones who pass on and the manner in which we cater for their mortal remains, have always been of cardinal importance.



The present burial grounds have become overcrowded and we are resorting to laying our kinfolk to rest on sites that have been used previously. Further, the congestion is now unsustainable and unmanageable. It is time for a new, modern cemetery, with a crematorium, that will provide a garden setting in which to repose our kith and ken and to visit their places of remembrance.

Therefore, the ABLP Government commissioned studies from local and overseas experts on the location, design and facilities for a new cemetery complete with Chapel and a crematorium with adequate space for vehicular traffic and the creation of a garden environment.

Tomlinson's has been selected as the most appropriate site for the new facility and all the designs for adequate burial space, crematorium, roads, trees and flower gardens and drainage are completed.

Within the next five years, the ABLP Government will build the new cemetery at Tomlinson's as a place of respect and dignity for our loved ones.

(Pictures show Artist's impressions of cemetery at Tomlinson's)



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA AND THE WORLD

Antigua and Barbuda under the ABLP operates a foreign policy in the world that puts the interest of our nation first. This does not mean that we disregard the interests of others, nor does it mean that we see ourselves as an 'island unto ourselves'. What it does mean, is that our national aspirations, needs and challenges constitute the priority areas of our relations with others.

In pursuit of foreign policy objectives, we will embrace all nations that extend a hand of friendship to us and we will work with those countries with which we share common concerns and mutual interests.

Among the priorities of our foreign relations in ***Vision 2023 and Beyond*** are: guarding the sovereignty of our nation; curbing the effects of climate change and sea-level rise that pose existential threats to us; preserving our economies and financial services sector from harmful external actions; and ensuring that our country gets a fair share of the world's bounty in access to financing and trade, particularly in services.

We will maintain the closest possible relations with our neighbouring states in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in pursuit of shared objectives. We will also strengthen our relations with all countries in our Hemisphere based on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, and, in that regard, we will uphold the Charters of the United Nations and the Organisation of American States. We will also work to strengthen the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and its outreach in trade and development with other countries and region.

We will also maximise the economic and strategic opportunities offered by closer engagement with Canada, China, the European Union, the United States of America and the United Kingdom - should it eventually separate from the EU - and we will seek to deepen our friendship with all of them.

We will also look globally to develop economically beneficial relations with countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle-East. We will continue to promote Antigua and Barbuda as attractive to free trade, investment and tourism, leveraging our modern port and airport infrastructure to be both an air and sea hub for the Caribbean region,

To the best of our ability, we will participate in international and multi-national organisations, including the United Nations, the Organisation of American States and the Commonwealth of Nations, to promote peace, development, justice and human rights as legitimate goals of the international system.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rebuilding Together: Making Our Country Better For Good



REBUILDING TOGETHER: MAKING OUR COUNTRY BETTER FOR GOOD

In this Manifesto, **Vision 2023 and Beyond**, the ABLP has laid out its plans for the next five years that establishes a springboard from which our nation will leap into the decades ahead.

We are growing the economy; empowering our people through education, land ownership and inclusive participation.

We have detailed our commitment to good governance – transparency and accountability and zero tolerance for any who would fleece state resources – for that must be the essential framework to rebuild together. The people must have **faith** and confidence that those to whom they entrust the stewardship of their affairs will not let them down.

We have shown that having inherited a calamitous economy in June 2014, in just four years the ABLP administration has converted it into the fastest growing economy in the Caribbean; we have turned debt to ownership; we have secured the fundamentals of our economy in tourism and services and we have successfully managed the effects of the worst hurricane in the Atlantic in history.

At the 2014 general election, the UPP declared in their manifesto that they would sell-off the Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority, the State Insurance Company, the Electricity Department of the APUA, the 25% shareholding in the Eastern Caribbean Amalgamated Financial Company Ltd, and the West Indies Oil Company (WIOC), see page 5 of the UPP 2104 manifesto. Such was the incompetence and callousness of the UPP, probably motivated by expectation of personal enrichment for some.

The ABLP did the opposite, we turned around these national entities and made them profitable for the benefit of the people; we bought majority ownership in WIOC by a creative and transparent deal that used not one cent of taxpayers' money and we secured acres of land for housing in the bargain. That is the difference between the UPP and the ABLP in leadership and knowledge to manage and develop our economy.

The UPP also stated in their 2014 manifesto (see page 6) that it was not feasible for the ABLP to abolish Personal Income Tax. They were determined to continue to tax the people and squander the money as their record plainly shows. The ABLP proved them wrong. We again abolished Personal Income Tax; we left the money in the people's pockets and we grew the economy even more.

As is their style, the UPP, which ruined the economy, and their leader, Harold Lovell, who, as Minister of Finance, was the Chief Architect of our economic destruction, our high unemployment and our enormously high debt – all of which the ABLP has turned around – will again make false pledges and promises they cannot keep. Placing our country's future in the UPP's hands would be nothing short of catastrophe. The ABLP knows that the people of Antigua and Barbuda will not make such a fatal mistake again.

The choice between the UPP and the ABLP is a choice between proven incompetence, mismanagement and malfeasance over 10 years and evident competence, sound administration and strong management of the nation's affairs in the interest of all.

The ABLP's **Vision 2023 and Beyond** is a people's plan for the continued growth and development of Antigua and Barbuda from which all will benefit. No sector of our society is omitted, no one is left out, no one is left behind.

In this plan, the ABLP and the people of Antigua and Barbuda will build our nation together and make our country better for good.



