



“Improving Public Sector Productivity: Actioning Awareness, Initiative and Advocacy”

Opening Remarks by Mr. Cleviston Haynes,
Governor (Ag), Central Bank of Barbados
2017 Week of Excellence Seminar
Monday, February 27, 2016

The Right Honourable Freundel Stuart, Q.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Barbados, Senator the Honourable Darcy Boyce, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, Ms. Toni Moore, General Secretary of the Barbados Workers Union, Mr. Charles Hebert, Chairman of the Barbados Private Sector Association, Mr. Cedric Murrell, President, Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados, members and leaders of the Barbados Employers’ Confederation, the Barbados National Productivity Council; specially invited presenters and coordinators; other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

We are again delighted to welcome all of you to the Central Bank of Barbados and to thank you, the Social Partners, for again giving us the opportunity to host this important seminar on your behalf.

Improving productivity as a means of strengthening the competitiveness of our economy and enhancing economic growth remains an important goal to which we should all aspire. Thus, to me, it is encouraging that every year since 2003, the public sector, the trade union movement and the private sector, have been willing to set aside an entire week to discuss productivity, service delivery, efficiency, building strategic alliances, and other related matters.

The Central Bank of Barbados has indeed had a long association with the Annual Week of Excellence activities and our officers have in the past served from time to time on some of the planning committees.

In our view, the Week of Excellence has been an overwhelming success story. Initially, only a few organisations were involved, such as the Social Partnership in association with the Productivity Council, the Central Bank of Barbados, the Barbados Statistical Service and the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB). In recent years participants have included other organisations such as the National Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE), the Barbados Employers’ Confederation (BEC) and the Office of Public Sector Reform (OPSR). All of these organisations now contribute significantly to the growing success of the Week of Excellence initiative.

The Bank's continued involvement is testament to importance which this institution places on the issue of productivity. Equally, it represents our conviction that the Social Partners, working in unison to boost productivity across all sectors, have a valuable role to play in helping to spur economic activity in these challenging times.

Allow me now, to say a few words about the Social Partnership.

The Social partnership was started as a response to the crisis of 1991-1993. It was intended as a mechanism through which uncertainty and speculation could be replaced by dialogue and the exchange of information. The social partnership has contributed to the relative calm that has characterized the industrial relations landscape in Barbados and has helped to maintain social consensus. In these challenging times, I believe that there remains a role for the Social Partnership and let me assure you that the leadership of the Central Bank, in its continued pursuit of excellence, is committed to active collaboration with the social partners.

Over the last 12 months, the Barbadian authorities have been addressing the challenge of maintaining macro-economic stability.

Real growth prospects improved slightly during 2016 but taken over a longer period, the recovery has been slower than we all had hoped for. There are encouraging signs as it relates to growth over the medium term, provided that we are able to tackle our macroeconomic imbalances.

This seminar takes place at a time when persistent imbalances in the public finances are the source of much public discussion. The public sector budget currently exceeds \$3 billion, prompting some to question whether we are getting value for money and whether services are being delivered efficiently. It is at the centre of much of the debate of what is needed to place the economy on a sustainable growth path. Suggestions abound, ranging from outright privatization of some services currently provided by the public sector to enhancements in the delivery channels of goods and services to a more customer centric focus in the delivery of services.

This year's theme of ***Improving Public Sector Productivity: Awareness, Initiative and Actioning*** is therefore particularly opportune as the public sector represents the quintessential business that can benefit from enhanced productivity. There can be no doubt that our public sector has contributed significantly to the progress which our economy made during the first 50 years of Independence. The public sector has myriad functions and it has been an important lever for growth, whether in its administrative, regulatory, advisory or revenue collection roles or in the direct delivery of goods and services. However, there can also be no doubt that as we resolve the debates on the size, structure, governance and scope of the public sector, the next 50 years will demand more from our public sector if we are going to accelerate economic activity. As a small open economy dependent on the ability to export goods and services for our well-being, an efficient public sector is indispensable to improved private sector competitiveness.

Activity in the public sector has traditionally been largely rules based, creating what some see as excessive bureaucracy and slow delivery of services. While these complaints need to be assessed against the backdrop of the need for appropriate checks and balances, equity in decision-making and ensuring societal protection as it relates to health, safety, the environment etc., on-going reform of public sector processes, including here at the Bank, offer scope for enhancement in productivity.

The challenge for us therefore is to see how we can improve the speed, efficiency and cost effectiveness in the delivery of public services so that these complaints are a thing of the past. I believe that there is, for example, still much scope for the on-line delivery of services so that citizens don't have to wait in lines to effect payment for goods and services at great cost to productivity itself. But we must also focus on how to implement other far reaching improvements that might aid business facilitation and improve the attractiveness of doing business in Barbados. The interdependence of private and public sectors is critical to an acceleration of the growth rate.

Given the economic challenges that we face, the social partners must stand fast and press on together. We must bring new energy and bold strategies to the challenges which we all face. The real enemy is not each other, but unemployment, poverty and the need to renew our confidence in the Barbados economy.

Traditional notions and concepts of productivity, based on output per man and fair remuneration for work done, are still relevant. But perhaps of greater importance, is the need to renew the productivity of the mind, the heart, and of the human spirit.

As we keep in mind the theme of this year's Week of Excellence, let us

- a. Remain **Aware** that, ultimately we are fighting for the same cause – the betterment of ourselves, our organisations and our country.
- b. Seek out **Initiatives** that will allow us as at all levels to promote effective governance arrangements and make sustainable investments in people and technology.
- c. Take **Action** to increase and utilise the capacity of our organisations' human resource, in the pursuit of excellence which is not a transitory or one-off item. Rather, it is a constant, always to be sought and even surpassed.

In this the National Year of Productivity, it is left now to workers, worker representatives' organisations and entrepreneurs to renew their commitment to, and engender a spirit, a passion and a culture of productivity.

We can all do this.

In closing, I wish to again say that we at the Central Bank are happy to be associated with the Social Partners in promoting this *Week of Excellence*. Let me welcome all of you once more to the Central Bank and may your deliberations be fruitful and rewarding as you discuss this year's topic:

“Improving Public Sector Productivity: Actioning Awareness, Initiative and Advocacy.”

Thank you all.