



Ministerial Statement
by
Lt. Col. the Hon. David A Burch, OBE (Mil), ED, JP, MP
Minister of Public Works
Quarry Depot Feasibility Study
Friday, July 15th, 2022

Mr. Speaker as this Honourable House may be aware, the Ministry of Public Works issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) two weeks ago on Friday, July 1st, 2022 for a Financial Feasibility Study on the Government Quarry Depot located in Hamilton Parish.

Mr. Speaker, some background first:

The mandate for the Quarry Depot is to act as the Government's functional authority on all matters related to fleet management, mechanical engineering and maintenance activities including ensuring all Government vehicles are TCD tested and licensed annually. Its primary function is to manage the distribution and maintenance of approximately eight hundred (800) motor vehicles and equipment as well as operate and maintain the Government's Limestone Quarry, Asphalt and Recycling Plants.

As many currently serving in this House on both sides of the aisle can attest, due to a plethora of reasons including lack of financial investment under successive governments, inadequate strategic planning and ineffective management; the facilities and staffing expertise at this location have deteriorated significantly almost to the point of exhaustion over the last thirty (30) years. Subsequently, this has caused Government's assets to become increasingly unreliable and more expensive to maintain - thereby resulting in heightened criticism from the general public and Government employees who rely on the services provided by the Quarry team.

Mr. Speaker, I would also mention that major infrastructure investments are required for the majority of the facilities located within the site. Retrofitting these assets have a conservative cost estimate in the tens of millions of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, many in the public may question whether the Government is doing anything to improve the conditions at the Quarry?

The short answer is yes. As of June 2022, the Government completed a major infrastructure investment programme which installed two new buildings that will be used for a heavy equipment workshop and a stores facility - both were desperately required.

The Ministry of Public Works has also hired a consultant to manage the Quarry operations following the sudden departure of the Principal Mechanical Engineer. This has proved very successful, for example, since the addition of this new manager in May 2022, the refuse truck operational fleet has increased from two (2) operational trucks to nine (9) operational trucks - and as high as twelve (12) on occasion. The goal is to methodically tackle the most critical vehicles such as those used for garbage collection, then work through the remainder of the fleet.

However **Mr. Speaker**, this administration recognises this is not enough to address all of the Quarry's outstanding issues.

For example here are several questions worth serious consideration:

1. Should the Government invest the tens of millions of dollars required to bring the quarry up to standard?
2. Should the Government lessen the remit of Quarry management and if so to what?
3. How much money does the quarry save the Government and the taxpayer by the services it provides in house?
4. Are the succession and training plans adequate?
5. What is the best direction the Government should take in planning for the future to ensure value for money?

These are the types of questions we are anticipating the Financial Feasibility Study will answer.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Works is aware of the sensationalism stemming from certain media outlets regarding the notions of potential "Privatisation" and redundancies. In fact, these are not bad words. But if we want to have the best

review of the Quarry operations, we simply cannot park this idea to the side as the Government needs to have a thorough, unbiased and independent review to make the most effective decisions moving forward. The report will provide recommendations for the Government to consider. This consideration will not occur without the full involvement of the Bermuda Industrial Union – with whom a Collective Bargaining Agreement exists and we fully support.

To be clear, the Government views the Bermuda Industrial Union as a partner and will have open dialogue with them throughout this process. Our union partner has also been made aware of the intention of Government to avoid redundancies.

Regardless of rumours that may arise in the media or elsewhere, this Government has not - nor will not – make any decisions on the way forward for the Quarry Depot until the report has been completed and properly scrutinised – shared and discussed with the Bermuda Industrial Union.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to be honest with ourselves – we must take a serious look at how we do things and then take the necessary steps to effect improvement. The review at the Quarry Depot is the beginning of taking such steps to improve our operations and make them more efficient.

I am confident that together we can agree a plan to make significant improvements to the operations at the Quarry Depot.

Thank you **Mr. Speaker**.