



THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE

#PLAN BELIZE

**“Leading for Sustained Growth and Prosperity for
All Belizeans”**

I. The National Challenges

Corruption and incompetence at high level. The present Government of Belize (GoB) has set a historical record for abusing public funds and public resources for the benefit of privileged UDP families, cronies and friends and devising schemes to exact payments from investors as campaign contributions. It has redefined the meaning and function of the executive branch of government to blur the distinction between the UDP, a private political party, and the state to the extent that UDP party business is conducted from the cabinet room, and has extended the tentacles of government bureaucracy into all areas of Belizean life with a view to making the UDP indispensable to prosperity. It has at the same time deliberately undermined the proper function of oversight offices and institutions by withholding key appointments and resources and, where appointments are made, by selecting loyal, unqualified appointees.

Multiple cases involving corruption and mismanagement have been recorded and reported, including the political gifting of public contracts of all kinds, without the review or approval of the Contractor General, such as the gifting of public contracts to family members of Ministers of Government and the Prime Minister, overvalued infrastructure contracts to facilitate campaign contributions, the unlawful expropriation of BTL and BEL and the deliberate mismanagement of subsequent litigation and settlement for private gain, the unlawful sale and issuance of permanent residence and passports to facilitate the buying of votes and political support, generous land compensation payments to select friends and family, the routine spending of public funds without prior legislative approval (but not to meet the lawful debts of Belize as recognised by the courts), and protecting and facilitating real estate development schemes which have landed participants in US courts accused of various federal offences reeking of fraud and racketeering.

Covid-19 pandemic: The social, economic and political impact of Covid-19 has been and continues to be devastating socially and economically for Belize. Tourism, estimated to account for at least 43 percent of the economy, has largely evaporated and is not expected to rebound any time soon. National economic output in 2020 is expected to contract by at least 12 percent and possibly by as much as 20 percent according to the Central Bank, and it is forecasted that the unemployment rate will increase to at least 30 percent, during the 2020 calendar year. The contraction of GDP may well be in the region of 30 percent and unemployment closer to 50 percent given the political taint of Central Bank estimates.

In the face of these dire consequences, the Government of Belize remains without a plan to, in any way, address these devastating consequences, being content instead to try to borrow and spend its way out of the economic crisis notwithstanding the already dire financial condition in which the country already finds itself. **A feeble economy threatens the dollar:** The fiscal policy of the Government has, for the past 12 years, been defined by massive spending in infrastructure with a view to stimulating aggregate demand, and by extension, promoting growth in GDP. After 12 years of pursuing the same expansionary policy, the national economy is now, in recession, after a paltry 0.3

percent nominal growth in GDP in 2019 (even before the Covid-19 pandemic), and the Government is without access to further resources to continue to finance its infrastructure programs.

The monies were in large part spent on importation and thereby lost to the economy, and when not so lost, found their way into the hands of a few political cronies and served only to further concentrate wealth in the hands of an UDP elite without any real trickle down to those that need it or to benefit the wider economy. The wider economic benefit of such expansionary fiscal policy has therefore been very limited so that its positive effects are now outweighed by the negative. The policy has succeeded only in crowding out any remaining private sector activity after the government sapped investor confidence by the expropriation of BTL and BEL for the flimsiest of reasons and saddling Belize with massive debt.

The Barrow administration spent some \$2.0 billion in capital expenditures over the last 12 years and the GDP grew by approximately 20 per cent or by approximately \$1.0 billion in nominal terms over that period. The entirety of that growth may well be wiped out due to mismanagement and COVID-19 leaving behind only the continuing obligation to repay the massive public debt incurred in pursuit of the borrow-and-spend policy. The UDP policy of borrow-and-spend to create prosperity is undeniably now a manifest failure, and the UDP can offer nothing else to move the economy forward.

With tourism collapsing as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, GoB is now broke. This has exposed a growing national dependence on a single type of economic activity. The economy has now grown overly dependent on tourism which has been promoted over the past decade in complete disregard for the need for diversification to buffer external shocks such as that created by the pandemic.

The basic structure of the economy has indeed changed under the UDP but not for the better. The primary sector as a contributor to GDP (i.e. agriculture, fisheries, forestry and mining) declined from 12.4 percent in 2015 to 9.6 percent in 2020 and continues to shrink. The secondary sector (i.e. manufacturing, construction and energy production) also declined from 14 percent to 12.7 percent for the same years and also continues to shrink. And the tertiary sector (i.e. tourism, hospitality, commercial, financial and other services) increased from 62.6 percent to 63.6 percent on the back of growth in tourism which is no more, at least in the short term.

These trends explain the doubling of the merchandise trade deficit since 2011, rising from a \$527m deficit in 2011 to a peak of \$1.2 billion in 2019 as tourism earnings and government borrowing and spending facilitated increased importation of goods and services while agricultural and manufacturing production and export earnings shrank.

GoB has borrowed heavily to pursue its failed expansionary fiscal policy, which has failed. The spending effected by it with the borrowed funds have failed to generate sufficient growth in national

income to keep pace with the borrowings. The debt/GDP ratio has accordingly increased to 95 percent, way above the ideal 60 percent.

By the time the state of emergency declared because of the Covid-19 pandemic is brought under control, perhaps in 2021, this ratio will readily exceed 100 percent indicating an unsustainable national debt which will require debt forgiveness and restructure as well as recourse to the IMF in order to resolve. The resulting economic effects will no doubt undermine the value of the Belize dollar sooner rather than later because of both an increased supply of Belize dollars created through increased domestic borrowing from the Central Bank to support continued government spending and because as well of the devastating decline in the availability of foreign currency owing to the contraction in tourism receipts.

A devaluation of the Belize dollar will undermine the real value of all Belize dollar savings and erode the purchasing power of all incomes and will no doubt put increased pressure on the poor given our continued reliance on imported goods to meet basic needs.

More impoverishment and inequality: In 2010 a detailed study determined that the poverty rate in Belize was 41.3 percent, and recent informal studies and estimates put the rate closer to 50 percent. People are considered poor when they cannot afford to meet their basic needs (i.e. food, shelter, clothing/shoes, education, health, electricity and potable water), because they cannot find gainful employment or do not have the skills and resources to produce goods or services to generate sufficient income to meet those needs.

The poor are deprived of basic opportunities and choices in life, which typically result in the denial of human dignity and of effective participation in the political, economic and social processes. If poverty in Belize is not addressed urgently, particularly in light of Covid-19, poverty will continue to grow to engulf the second half of the population which will in turn put Belize in a downward spiral to complete social collapse. The threat is indeed existential.

Escalating crime and violence: From 2013 to 2018, the murder rate of Belize has averaged about 140 murders per annum, ranked as number 5 in the American hemisphere. Belize was a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor, primarily from Central America. In recent years, narco-trafficking is an all-time high with frequent night landings of drug planes on back roads all over the country. Then the escalating incidence of violence, home invasions and robberies is extremely worrisome for the people, especially in the urban areas. Undoubtedly, these criminal activities will continue on the rise if we do not reverse the worsening state of the economy, poverty and family conditions of stress across the country.

All these problems are exacerbated by a Government that is deaf, arrogant, incompetent and corrupt. The Belizean people must now suffer, living every day in an environment of escalating crime, violence and widespread insecurity, largely because of inept government of the past 12 years. The

same 12 years were meant to put Belize on a path to better, having been promised that the best was yet to come.

Now, with limited time and public funds, the country has to face the challenges of a structurally deficient economy exacerbated by COVID-19 which together threaten to ravage the limited capacities of our economic system.

2. Mission and Vision of the PUP

The social and economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore fundamental structural deficiencies of the Belizean economy including exposing the underbelly of significant poverty, a lack of diversification and an inability to mobilize and redistribute capital to meet the changing needs of society. These fundamental deficiencies existed long before Covid-19 but Covid-19 has made obvious that they must be addressed in order to guarantee survival in today's world.

Development, Prosperity and Peace for all the Belizean people require nothing less than a fundamental re-organization of the economy around the values of social justice and equity. From the 1960s, the fundamental *Creed of the People's United Party (PUP)* has been Belizean nationalism for social justice based on the mixed economy, which Father of the Nation George Price called the "Peaceful, Constructive Revolution." A PUP-led Government will work full-throttle towards a Belize that works for everyone and will seek to realize its historical objectives in a considered and fair way. The ideological underpinning of the mixed economy is growth with redistribution as appropriate to guarantee human dignity and promote equity.

The vision that drives the PUP is to create an environment in which every Belizean enjoy as their right and in a real meaningful way the following opportunities:

- Every Belizean should have an opportunity to go to school and be educated and trained with relevant skills. Personal success starts with a good education.
- Every Belizean should have access to adequate healthcare including timely access to quality primary healthcare. Everyone must be healthy in order to produce and fend for oneself and family.
- Every Belizean should have access to a piece of land. With land, one immediately has a valuable base to create opportunities for empowerment and personal growth. Every Belizean in rural areas needs lands to be productive, feed the family and generate income.
- Every Belizean should have access to employment. A job is a driving force for personal growth and development and a basis for developing self-esteem and promoting human dignity.
- Every Belizean should have access to decent housing. A home breeds stability, family and love, and is essential for nurturing and developing our children.

In pursuit of this vision, a PUP-led government will be driven by the core values of servant leadership, integrity, excellence, democracy, teamwork, hard work, eagerness to learn, and transparency.

In the context of the Covid-19 crisis, the economic recession and loss of confidence in the UDP Government, the PUP regards all the very grave national challenges facing us as existential threats. The ideology of the PUP makes it uniquely qualified to provide the kind of leadership needed to set Belize on a new path to prosperity on which we are able as a nation to start to tackle poverty and to stop crime and corruption in fair, just and meaningful ways.

3. The Way forward

The path forward requires nothing less than a complete transformation of a nation, starting with a redefinition of the role of Government and a rationalization of the use of public resources, a complete restructuring of systems of governance, including in particular the overhaul of the laws of public finance, and major adjustments to the planning and management culture of the Government of Belize.

It further requires a vigorous pursuit of structural adjustments to the national economy to address unemployment and attendant poverty, tackle persistent trade deficits, and promote diversification, energy independence and food security.

Securing sustained growth and prosperity for all Belizeans will require as a first step the adoption and pursuit of strategic goals by all Belizeans with the leadership, assistance and encouragement of a PUP government, including the following:

I. Poverty reduction

A PUP led government will enable and assist those without resources to rise above poverty, by ensuring they have access to enough healthy foods, relevant education, timely healthcare, land ownership, decent housing and basic needs when they are unable to provide for themselves.

A PUP government will:

- Restructure and grow the national economy to reduce poverty as a matter of urgency
- Raise minimum standards of living through increased employment opportunity and reward including raising the minimum wage from \$3.25/hr to at least \$5.00/hr within the next 5 years by reducing other costs of production and redirecting resources to workers;
- Ensure food and nutrition security for the poor, single mothers and others most vulnerable across the country regardless of political affiliation.

- Provide free education to the level of sixth form regardless of political affiliation subject only to reasonable academic performance;
- Provide universal access to primary health care. through the use of an expanded National Health Insurance scheme;
- Contribute to the construction of affordable housing, including making house lots available for families in need, starting with those at the bottom of the socio-economic “ladder”.
- Implement the National Belize Youth Corpsto develop technical, business and other skills and mentoring for youth at risk throughout the country; and
- Embark on a “big push” approach for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), family farming, women and youth and marketing of products to stimulate activity in rural areas.
- Revisit the policy on the issuing of contracts for the management of boledo and lottery to ensure that a fair percentage of the profits go directly to poverty alleviation programs.

A PUP-led government will address growing horizontal inequalities by emphasizing increased investment and economic activity in rural communities. Those communities that have benefitted from increased investments in tourism have been localized so that only select communities have benefitted from growth opportunities in the service sector (e.g. tourism, financial and commercial sectors) while rural communities have lagged behind, Such inequalities must be addressed not by limiting growth in those areas benefitting from tourism, but by recognising, emphasizing and promoting those activities in which rural communities enjoy comparative advantage.

A PUP-led government will also focus on addressing vertical inequalities. The increasing gaps in income and productivity within urban and rural communities will be addressed through well coordinated programs of investment, skills enhancement and enterprise development, specifically targeted to the pockets of poverty and unemployment.

Benchmark Indicators:

- Household income
- No of feeding programmes for the hungry
- Local unemployment, percent
- Delinquency and crime rates (numbers)
- New investments in poverty-reduction programs,

2. Complete Economic transformation

The transformation of the Belizean economy is a monumental and long-term undertaking. It requires a unified effort by the public and private sector including all social partners which a PUP-led government is prepared to inspire, lead and facilitate. A PUP-led government will:

- Provide competent leadership and management of the national economy and restore investor confidence to promote private sector investments.
- Engage in complete and fundamental tax reforms to reduce the costs of production and to redistribute resources to provide significant relief to middle income earners while exempting lower income earners in order to stimulate aggregate demand.
- Promote diversified growth in the national economy through the encouragement of increased private sector investment in the primary and secondary sectors.
- Create job opportunities for all Belizeans but in particular for women and youth by emphasizing and encouraging investment generally and prioritizing activities particularly suited to women and youth.
- Provide uniform systems of incentives for investments under which incentives are granted as of right without the need for the exercise of any ministerial discretion.
- Modernize corporate and insolvency laws and provide for the creation and registration of charges on shares to facilitate the raising and redistribution of loan capital.
- Provide for Consumer Credit Protection.
- Eliminate all barriers to doing business in Belize including eliminating meaningless and excessive bureaucracy which provide opportunity for corruption.
- Redefine the role of government to eliminate wasteful bureaucracy and to assume the role of facilitator instead of primary economic actor by emphasizing the creation of a favourable environment for private sector led investment and growth.
- Create a new retirement incentives program to encourage investment and retirement in Belize and enhance capacity to raise capital.
- Create a new immigration status for investors investing and/or retiring in Belize, and/or acquiring real estate in Belize of prescribed values;
- Reorganize and empower the judicial system to improve efficiency and accountability for performance in the delivery of justice with a view to creating a reliable and predictable legal environment.
- Revisit and empower Belizeans to undertake investments abroad and to hold foreign currency.
- Improve transparency by empowering oversight institutions and making resources available to them for the carrying out of their functions; and
- Promote and invest in solar and other clean energy projects in order to create the capacity for Belize to truly diversify its productive capabilities and be competitive not only in the domestic but also in the export markets.

A PUP-led government will also strengthen the essential institutions of education, research, marketing and financing, to aggressively encourage entrepreneurship, attract foreign investments, promote new product development, and improve marketing skills. It will further:

- **Put idle land in the hands of Belizeans** -- Embark on land reform and enforce land use regulations in order to: limit land speculation, allocate available land resources to uses involving high land productivity and sustainability;
- Establish and administer a Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in direct partnership with communities to promote socio-economic development by way of the implementation of projects conceived and identified by affected communities as an engine for community-led change.
- Lead, promote and invest in the discovery of new resources, new industries, use of all raw materials and waste products, with a view to the creation of new goods and services with market potential in all sectors,
- Improve labour specialization and productivity by investing in human capital to enhance knowledge, skills, entrepreneurship and discipline, in order to improve technical and professional competence for the primary and secondary sectors,
- Rehabilitate rural and village roads and bridges to improve access, reduce transport costs and improve the livelihoods of some 196 villages, starting with those whose roads are impassable during the rainy season, the sugarcane roads and villages in the extreme southern region with no access roads. This will be done in phases.
- Update and modernize the national building, industrial and infrastructure development codes to standardize and regulate the design and specifications for the construction of structures; and
- Explore clean development options in the Exclusive Economic Zone (approximate area of 21,544 miles), such as sustainable deep sea fishing, tourism ventures, and renewable energy generation,

Agriculture and Industry:

This policy will expose our children and youth, both males and females, to the short- and long-term roles of agriculture in the sustainable economic development of our nation. They will be trained and educated to appreciate agriculture, to participate in all phases of the value chains from the field or farm to the consumer, and to manage agriculture as a business enterprise and as an honourable and decent way to earn a living. Accordingly, a PUP-led government will:

- Focus policy implementation on import replacement and substitution, export expansion and strengthening the linkages of tourism with our local productive sectors, using public/private sector partnerships (PPP) models, as the primary means to grow our national economy.
- Review the entire tax system and enact reforms to have a simplified, fair, efficient and development-oriented driven system that works for the producers and provide incentives to the taxpayers, not only the Government, in the form of affordable financing and credit services, and other priority needs for the effective participation of the private sectors. These reforms should also promote a more equitable distribution of wealth between producers/investors and labourers.
- Review and improve our trade policy agreements in our region and promote the export of Belizean products, both traditional exports and development of new products with export

potential. We must change from being an open-import-driven economy to an open-export-driven economy.

- Work with the associations of the 4 traditional exports, i.e. sugar, citrus, banana and shrimp production, to address their constraints and mobilize investment and technical resources for expanding production and exports.
- Improve access to affordable financing for farmers and micro, small and medium size entrepreneurs by working with credit unions and commercial banks to offer better lending and repayment for farmers, in terms of low interest loans and providing incentives and other support for local agricultural producers. We will seek markets to provide access for Belizeans goods produced from small and medium size Belizean producers.
- Build resilience to climate change disasters and risks through education, preparation, diversification and innovative climate-smart systems of land use, in particular for the small producers and farmers in high-risk prone regions of the country.
- Develop and forge partnerships with renowned universities, regional and international institutions to mobilize investment for R&D to adapt technology, irrigation, germplasm, seedling propagation, integrated pest and disease management, “green” pesticides, food processing and value-adding and technical extension for farmers through on-site demonstrations and farmer training schools.
- Grow and produce more of what we eat and promote more consumption of what we grow, as food and feed imports amount to an average B\$200 m per annum. Belizeans farmers and processors should be able to replace or substitute at least 50 percent of those foods and feed imports in the next 5 years. (similar to import substitution)
- Rebuild the agriculture sector through the teaching of agriculture in schools about the importance of agriculture, promote the growing of crops in school and at home, producing their own food snacks, and explaining why as a society Belize must invest, be productive and apply more business principles in agriculture.
- Reduce food loss and waste by improving storage and logistic facilities and investing in the development of new products from the by-products and waste at the local and community levels, i.e. value adding and processing technologies.
- Improve our trade and market intelligence for international access and market penetration, to enable improved decision-making on investment and production.

Service sector:

- Invest in an effective national public health system with a solid science-based strategy in order to address diseases such as Covid-19
- Strengthen the healthcare system to ensure proper expertise, pricing and quality in order to eliminate the need to travel abroad for specialist care;
- Develop adequate medical facilities in key tourist destinations such as Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker, Placencia and Hopkins as well as in new destinations like Sarteneja and Consejo.

- Facilitate the sustainable development of tourism in various ways including by way of tax and exchange control reform, removing transactional and bureaucratic inefficiencies that increase the cost and reduce the ease of doing tourism business in Belize.
- Take concrete measures to assess the competitive advantages and enhancement of offshore financial services;
- Take concrete measures to realize the full potential of the business process outsourcing (BPOs) and value-added services (e.g. software programming), given our available, trained youth labor force, capabilities in English and Spanish languages, as well as ICT infrastructure throughout the whole country; and
- Further develop and expand ICT infrastructure and digitization which will allow for the timely service delivery and development of an enhanced Information Communications Technology export sector.

Benchmark indicators:

- Annual growth rate,
- Per capita income
- Poverty Rate
- Unemployment rate, percent
- Annual trade deficit,
- Lending interest rate to the productive sectors, percent
- Tax revenues,
- Government debt/GDP ratio, percent

Trade deficit reduction:

The trade deficit is a massive leak of precious resources from the national economy and must be plugged. We must aim to reduce the trade deficit by at least 50 percent over the next 10 years as a national priority by aggressively promoting export-led growth in the primary and secondary sectors and discouraging consumer spending on imported goods and undertaking where appropriate foreign direct public and private investments which support and/or enhance export earnings. Government's fiscal policies must be targeted to reducing unnecessary importation until reserves are adequately restored and are sustainable.

A PUP-led government will:

- Revisit, revise and negotiate current trade policies and agreements with a view to increasing exports and/or securing a better export/import balance with Caricom, México, Central America, ROC-Taiwan and the USA.

- Promote investment in the local production, processing and marketing of agricultural materials, food products in replacement and/or substitution of imported goods and services;
- Invest heavily in the establishment of solar farms in order to reduce reliance on fossil fuels for energy and save importation costs of fuel;
- Restructure import duties on vehicles to encourage the importation of energy efficient modes of transportation including public transportation;
- Promote less consumption of imported foods and beverages, especially junk food and foods of low quality, and more consumption of natural, fresh food and juices locally produced;
- Provide support and incentives to an aggressive export expansion strategy by mobilizing resources for investments in storage, loading facilities, transportation/shipping and food safety and quality standards.
- Provide technical assistance to secure access to export markets and negotiate contracts for exporting products;
- Renew investments in and promote the expansion of the traditional export commodities; and
- Review revise and improve all legislation regulating agricultural production and exportation including those in place for Sugar, Citrus and Banana production and exportation with a view to eliminating archaic licensing and bureaucratic requirements.

Sugar:

- Promote true cooperation among the cane farmer associations, ASR/BSI, Ministries and other key actors, to make the industry more competitive and sustainable.
- Assist in mobilizing financial and technical resources for research and development, training and adoption and use of technology to improve yields and quality and to reduce costs and risks in the entire value chain from production to the export of direct consumption products.

Banana:

- Cooperate with the banana growers to prepare and mitigate the impact of natural disasters on the industry and most importantly to enhance production and exports while maintaining the high quality of the fruit and adequately remunerating workers.
- Assist the industry to mobilize resources for research and education to deal with the persisting problems of disease (sigatoka) management, soil fertility and the local production of quality planting (merry stem) materials.
- Facilitate and advocate for an expansion of the EU market share for our Belizean banana and explore other foreign markets.

Citrus:

- Work with the main actors of the industry to improve the leadership and management of the industry, and encourage the forging of a consensual plan to address the major problems of falling production, exports and income.
- Assist to mobilize the technical and financial resources to address the citrus greening constraint by increasing the cultivation of more citrus by promoting investments in new plantations of citrus and other fruits, and to accelerate processing of juices and citrus-based exports.

Fish and aquaculture:

- Promote and support the fishing industry and fisherman cooperatives to manage the lobster, conch and fish catches in a sustainable manner.
- Work with the shrimp farmers to analyse Belize's position in the shrimp industry and to identify strategies for improving its competitiveness and for restoring its position of being an important generator of revenue and foreign exchange.
- Assist the shrimp farmers to control the effect of diseases that has decimated production and threaten the survival of the industry, and, multiple smaller and medium-sized businesses.

Livestock, basic grains and pulses and other agricultural products:

- Promote and assist the Mennonite communities to expand the production and processing of livestock, basic grains and pulses for export to Caricom, Guatemala, Mexico and other countries;
- Mobilize complementary investment and incentives for developing industries for production, processing and packaging of food products and beverages for the domestic and export markets;
- Facilitate the exportation of livestock to Mexico and Guatemala; and
- Explore, identify and promote other export markets, e.g. for hemp, furniture, fruits and vegetable, flowers and orchids and honey.

Benchmark indicators:

- Export quantities and value for specific commodities
- Import quantities and value for specific commodities
- Annual and quarterly trade deficits
- Tax revenues
- International trade agreements, commodity pricing info, and opportunities.

Citizen security:

A PUP led government will combat crime by investing in improving and modernizing effective penal systems which not only serve to deter crime but also serve to meaningfully promote the reform and re-integration into society of offenders.

We believe in creating opportunity for effective participation in society instead of throwing more armed security personnel at citizens is the best long term approach to reducing the incidence of crime and promoting citizen security.

A PUP-led government will accordingly, as a national priority:

- Establish separate remand centers for accused persons and detention facilities for youth offenders which recognise and respect the fact these persons have not been convicted of any wrongdoing and that do not expose these persons to criminal influences;
- Provide for the use of more non-custodial sentences and punishment options for non-violent and family related offences;
- Provide for service in National Cadet Core as an alternative to incarceration;
- Establish community resource centers in all vulnerable areas to be run in partnership with religious denominations to assist in mentoring and educating, feeding and caring for children of those vulnerable neighbourhoods;
- Treat drug addiction and drug use as a medical and not as criminal behaviour punishable by incarceration;
- Ensure that those areas and groups with high incidence of poverty benefit from the socio-economic programs.
- Establish a Police Board made up of GoB, the Opposition, and civil society and other relevant stakeholders to remove political interference and root-out corruption in the Police Department
- Introduce a juvenile court linked with social and economic services, and appoint a special prosecutor to handle gang-related crimes supported by a Police team for evidence gathering, with special attention to eliminating gang-related witness intimidation;
- Implement the Belize Youth Service Corps (BYSC) to address the unfortunate and alarming crises of youth at risk, to get them off the streets and create a new environment for them;
- Develop stronger physical education programs that will keep our youths actively involved in sport and character-building exercises by employing BDF and police training teams;
- Support community-policing efforts and partner with community-managed watch groups that monitor and report on any events that could threaten the peace in such communities; and
- Bolster Police, BDF and CG presence and patrols in order to contain hotspots in the short term.

Protection of the environment:

A PUP government recognizes the importance of pursuing development in a measured and sustainable way which respects and preserves our environment.

A PUP-led government will, as a matter of national priority, take measures to properly regulate and preserve our water resources and to offer greater protection to our forest reserves and watershed areas in order to protect and conserve these vital natural resources.

A PUP-led government will:

- Manage and use sustainably the Meso-American Reef System, coastal and marine resources for the sustainable development of Belize.
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of our natural forest ecosystems, halt land degradation and biodiversity loss, and promote practices to mitigate climate change

A PUP led government will continually monitor and assess environmental impacts in the agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy as well as new developments in order to ensure good environmental practices and conformance with good environmental standards. To that end, a PUP-led government will:

- Monitor and improve the water quality of our main rivers, lagoons and other water bodies to safeguard the good health of our people, fish, animals and the river ecosystems;
- Strengthen capacities at technical and community levels to promote and practice sustainable tourism practices that are environmentally friendly, thereby minimizing the carbon footprint;
- Continue to promote and support the monitoring and training programs with the fishers, reef-users, coastal and rural communities on good fishing practices, marine resource conservation, sustainable reef management, safe garbage disposal;
- Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of our natural forest and agroforestry ecosystems;
- Improve education, awareness and capacities at the national and local levels to prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change and natural disasters and build resilience in the productive, commercial and residential sectors of the country;
- Suppress forest fires and mitigate their negative effects on wildlife, forest resources and rural communities;
- Improve capacity to monitor and secure protected areas from unlawful incursions;
- Mobilize technical and financial resources from the public/private sectors, NGOs and from the international community to address the above listed priority actions: and
- Promote and support all private conservation of natural resources.

Benchmark indicators:

- Water quality
- Deforestation rate
- Carbon emission levels
- Energy consumption rate

- Product/renewable recycling rate
- Waste reduction
- Noise pollution
- Human disease incidence in proximate localities

Eliminating Corruption:

A PUP-led government will, as a national priority, demonstrate that it is serious about stopping corruption with significant policy reforms and concrete actions in line with Belize's treaty obligations. The PUP recognises that corruption must be eliminated otherwise no government policy, program or action can succeed no matter how well conceived.

Hence, as a national priority, a PUP-led government will:

- Engage in the strengthening and reform of all governance institutions including the Integrity Commission, the Ombudsman, the Contractor General, The Auditor General, and the Public Accounts Committee by providing for wide participation in independent appointments to all relevant offices and the appropriation directly by Parliament of the resources necessary for these offices to function;
- Introduce provisions for the disqualification from office of public officers including Ministers who exercise statutory powers in matters in which they have a direct or indirect pecuniary interest and provide for a process for removal from office that can be initiated and prosecuted privately without government assistance or approval;
- Reform the Finance and Audit Reform Act to strengthen the system for budgeting and spending public monies and to make a breach of its provisions not only criminal offences but also a basis for disqualification from office;
- Enact campaign finance reform to regulate the timing of elections and campaigning, registration of political parties, provision of public resources, transparency in mobilization of private funds, and the prevention of vote buying;
- Promote and enforce accountability in government by promoting transparent appointments to the judiciary and providing for the creation of a public fund separate from the Consolidated Revenue Fund from which the expenses of the judiciary are to be met and for the Judiciary to administer that fund directly without the need for interaction with the executive to ensure its independence; and
- Restore all registry functions, including in particular the lands registries, to the judiciary by restoring registry powers to a Registrar General who is answerable to the Chief Justice and not to any Minister of government;
- Embark on comprehensive reform of all existing legislation to eliminate the exercise of Ministerial discretion for the conferral of legislated benefits and to introduce a merit and right based system for the distribution of such benefits.

- Promote and appoint more women in positions of leadership and management across the public sector, and advocate for the same in the other sectors of society where women are underrepresented.

Benchmark indicators:

- Timely audit of public accounts
- No. public scandals, embezzlement and loss of assets
- No. citizen complaints reported
- No. convictions of government leaders and officials for corrupt behaviour
- Proportion of women in leadership and management, percent

Management of Covid-19 Pandemic:

A PUP-led government will act promptly to address the management of the Covid-19 pandemic by putting an end to the state of emergency which exists and immediately move to enact legislation introducing and defining levels of alert and lockdowns to be triggered by independently verifiable science-based criteria.

A PUP-led government will seek to balance the competing interests of health and the economy in a way which realizes optimal benefits for the majority of Belizeans and will place more reliance on the voluntary adoption of safety measures where appropriate.

A PUP-led government will legalize and formalize the participation of the Opposition and social partners in the management structure and in the delivery of government assistance during lockdowns regardless of political affiliation.

Benchmark Indicators:

- No. of Covid-19 infections and deaths
- No. tested per 1,000 population
- Unemployment rate
- GDP growth

4. Strategic Programming, Implementation and Monitoring

Strategic programs will be designed, coordinated and implemented by teams constituted by persons sourced across ministries, departments and sectors and including the participation of social partners and actors, at national and local levels, to accomplish each of the above strategic objectives in an

effective, efficient and sustainable way. Participants will include professionals and technicians from relevant ministries and other relevant and interested stakeholders including NGOs and community based organizations.

Specific indicators of performance for each goal will be monitored based on empirical results, outcomes and impact, in ways that are meaningful to the people of Belize. Programs and projects showing good outcomes and impact will be expanded; those not showing good outcomes will be terminated and replaced with new programs. The identified objectives are intended to be bold and to challenge society to rise to the economic challenges facing the nation. A PUP led government will lead and facilitate the process recognising that everyone has something to contribute rather than dictating policies.

5. A National, Not Partisan, Governance Paradigm

Since Independence, our young democracy has followed a governance paradigm of “winner takes all”. In fact, this UDP governs like a dictatorship with the PM as the commander in chief who has the audacity to undermine the sanctity of the rule of law and even defy the judgment of the Supreme Court of the land. As a result, wanton corruption is embedded and grows unchecked in our government.

To reverse this trend, the PUP’s 2020 Plan Belize is based on its absolute commitment to its mission, vision and core values thereof, which constitute the only requirements for serving and participating in the PUP-led government. Apart from the Cabinet, the PUP will search for and engage the best minds and talents that our country can offer for the full range of leadership, managerial and operational functions of its institutions and affiliated bodies. And the PUP as the Party of government will work for and serve all Belizeans, faithful to the Constitution and fully accountable to the people, to ensure that **Belize works for everyone!**