



## BUILDING INSTITUTIONS CONT'D

However, we trust that in 2020, there will be a speedy resolution of the outstanding court matter, currently under appeal, so that the process of assessment of properties can be accelerated.

### • Procurement

Madam Speaker, the Office of the Procurement Regulator is now fully staffed with the establishment of a comprehensive database on public procurement, including information on tenders received and the award and value of contracts.

We are advised that the Procurement Depository will be accessible shortly and we have been advancing the capacity-building and technical work relating to the establishment of procurement units in relevant ministries and agencies as required by the procurement legislation. Procuring units across the state sector will soon be provided with guidance handbooks. Discussions and consultations with the Office of the Procurement Regulator have continued throughout 2019 and the Procurement Regulations are soon to be laid in Parliament.

Further, we have received recommendations from the Regulator regarding the appropriate treatment of public-private-partnerships and Government-to-Government arrangements, which we intend to adopt. Accordingly, with the soon-to-be proclaimed sections of the Procurement Act and the issuance of the associated Regulations, with an appropriate **six (6)** months transition period, as requested by the Regulator, we expect to be in a position to fully implement the new procurement arrangements in 2020.

### • National Investment Fund

Madam Speaker, the National Investment Fund has been a resounding success. The three (3)

fixed rate bond series: 4.5 percent for 5 years; 5.7 percent for 12 years and 6.6 percent for 20 years were heavily over-subscribed, eliciting **8,103** applications valued at **\$7.349 billion**, that is, **1.8 times** the **\$4.0 billion** offer.

Indeed, so attractive are the NIF Bonds that they are currently trading on the stock exchange at levels above par, ensuring a profit for those who for one reason or another wish to sell their bonds. A far cry from the mischievous and unfounded categorization of NIF as a "*Ponzi Scheme*" by those opposite. With these additional instruments the capital market has been widened and strengthened with investors receiving a steady flow of income through the required semi-annual distributions of **\$112.0 million** in both **February and August 2019**. The companies that comprise the asset base of NIF are also doing well, and growing in value.

It is not to be overlooked that this NIF came about as a result of our hard work in recovering taxpayers' money owed from the Clico bailout in 2009. Once again, the detractors said it couldn't be done. We did it.

***NIF has thus delivered \$224 million in dividend income into the pockets of thousands of members of the public in a single year, which will continue for the next nineteen (19) years.*** NIF is a signature achievement of this PNM Government, giving back to taxpayers, as we promised, significant returns on public funds used in the bailout of CLICO.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to use this vehicle as a mechanism for monetizing major state assets, including those assets transferred to the Government for re-payment of the cost of the CL Financial/CLICO bailout.

Barring unforeseen circumstances, I propose to introduce in fiscal 2020 a second National