

***An excerpt from the 2009 Budget presentation  
by Minister of Finance- Dr. Errol Cort- December 2008***

***Expenditure in the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs***

**Madam Speaker:**

The UPP Administration understands that in order to make the best of our human resources, priority must be given to transforming the education sector and strengthening educational services at all levels. Investment in our human capital is absolutely essential if Antigua and Barbuda is to keep pace with an ever changing global environment.

In this regard, Madam Speaker, **an allocation of \$84,829,510** is made in Budget 2009 to facilitate the implementation of the various programmes and activities of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth Affairs; these resources will allow the Ministry to press forward with some key programmes that will promote the further development of educational services in Antigua and Barbuda.

One area that will receive particular focus in 2009 will be the provision of teachers. Experts in the field of education have identified an optimal student-teacher ratio that is most conducive to learning and knowledge transfer.

To help move our classrooms to that more optimal size, a total of 100 new teachers will be recruited for placement in our primary and secondary schools. In addition, the Government will focus on providing incentives to teachers – particularly those teachers with skills and expertise in special fields.

**Madam Speaker:**

Given the growing demands on our school facilities, it is vital that we move with some urgency towards the construction of new and more modern education infrastructure. In this regard, an allocation of \$23 million has been made in the Budget to facilitate the construction of a new secondary school in Five Islands.

Also, the Government will be receiving a grant and technical support from the Caribbean Development Bank in 2009 to assess our additional education infrastructure needs, following which resources will be provided to commence construction of another school in Antigua and Barbuda.

**Madam Speaker:**

One of the visions of this UPP Administration is to provide universal secondary education to all Antiguan and Barbudans. What this means is that all children will be given the opportunity to enter secondary school at the age of 11 or 12 years.

**Madam Speaker:**

An important element of the plans to overhaul the education system is the construction of a new, state-of-the-art library. In this regard, \$6.5 million will be made available to ensure that the project is completed. These resources will be made available from the Consolidated Fund and from the resources made available to Antigua through its participation in the PetroCaribe arrangement.

Madam Speaker, the new library project has faced some challenges. However, I am happy to report that we have overcome these difficulties and will complete the library project by June 2009. I wish to take this opportunity on behalf of the Government to thank the many individuals, businesses and organisations that have contributed financial and other assistance for the construction and implementation of this project.