

**PRESS STATEMENT RE MINISTER SINCKLER'S PARTIAL REVERSAL ON
MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE TAX**

HON. MIA AMOR MOTTLEY

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

I welcome the news that some pensioners whose properties are valued at \$190,000 or less will not now pay the tax. But there are still thousands more pensioners who still have to pay the full tax if their properties are above this value. At least, under the Land Tax Act, these pensioners get the first \$190,000 deducted from the taxable value and then they also get a 50% rebate on the tax.

There is still too much vagueness in the Minister's statement and we will await the amendments. We cannot govern this way, as it appears to be knee-jerk. Taxation must be clear, certain and consistent. If not you end up with the confusion and despair we have with this tax.

At what age do we define pensioners? Is it 65? Is it 67? What about the other members of BARP who are over 50 years old but on a reduced income or have started receiving their pensions? They must still pay this tax. What about people who have been laid off or are not working for whatever reason but who have inherited land or bought their properties? They still have to pay. In addition the burden remains heavily on Churches and Charities and we all know that they have no income and must rely on their congregations and donors. A tax on assets has no relationship to people's or institutions' capacity to pay.

We welcome the ease for the farmers. But what about the hoteliers and other tourism providers? They must still pay this tax yet our economy's return to growth largely depends on their ability to survive and thrive. Nine months after

the Ministry of Finance gave Sandals concessions, hoteliers still await that level playing field but now have to pay this excessive tax.

I am also perplexed that the Minister wants to make it sound as though he is giving a concession in relation to penalties and interest. Once Government extended the payment to July 28th 2014, there is no legal authority to charge interest and penalties for failing to pay by July 28th because the Act has not been amended to refer to that date.

So this is not a concession that the Minister is giving. He is simply now ensuring that he acts in accordance in the law.

This is still a bad tax and the Barbados Labour Party still calls for the repeal of this tax.

We are going to address these issues and more on Sunday night at Carlisle Car Park because we need to make sure that Barbadians understand that it is not the collection of revenue that is the problem, it is the nature of the tax that is bad, that is painful, unfair, too few people are still carrying the burden. There are individuals and institutions in this country which continue to make profits today but who will not be liable simply because they rent their buildings.

We know that the Government needs revenue but the burden must be shared fairly across the population. This tax does not do this and many Bajans simply cannot afford to pay after the many taxes and increases they now face. Better and fairer can be done.

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