

PRESS STATEMENT ON ALMOND

BY

MS. SANTIA BRADSHAW, MP

OCTOBER 19, 2013

We, in the Barbados Labour Party welcome the news of the presence of major global brands Sandals and Beaches Resorts as an addition to the Barbados tourism product and we believe that it is an offering which will add value to the existing product. We are also grateful for the seamless transition which will see the Couples brand (formerly Casuarina Hotel) now operate under the Sandals brand from the 6th November ensuring that there is no further loss of jobs or hotel plant in the sector.

However, we note that the headlines of 1500 jobs seeks to convey the impression that 1500 jobs will immediately be available to Barbadians anxious to find work. The reality is, that it will be another 9-12 months before construction at the Almond Beach Village can begin. This essentially means another 9-12 months before Barbadians can secure employment in the construction of the property and another 2-3 years before they can be employed in any capacity in the newly constructed hotel.

Also, what we do know is that Sandals isn't purchasing the property but rather that the Government of Barbados through the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. will be paying \$100million dollars for the property and \$6million dollars for a brand which will have limited benefit.

After the sale has been completed, in the vicinity of some \$400 million will then have to be spent to build out a top class hotel for Sandals to lease. Given that the cost to the taxpayers of Barbados cumulatively will be around \$500 million we expect no less than a clear and comprehensive statement from the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Tourism to the country given the limited resources and high debt already being carried by the Government of Barbados.

We have already said that in our opinion that the Government is paying

\$30million more for a distressed property which has been closed for over 18 months.

It is to our certain knowledge that Sandals is about to open an expanded facility on the old La Source property in Grenada. In that instance however, it isn't the Government of Grenada that has bought the property but instead private investors. We have said over and over that the crisis in which the Barbados tourism industry finds itself is best represented by the fact that private investors have not shown interest in major tourism investments and hence this has led the Government to take on more and more exposure where investors are simply not willing to risk their money.

The call from the Barbados Labour Party once again is for full and frank disclosure about this latest development to assure Barbadians that the course of action being pursued is in indeed in their best interest.