

**Press Statement by Mr. Dale Marshall, Q.C., M.P.
Member of Parliament for St. Joseph**

The plight of St. Joseph residents especially, and other Barbadians, who have been forced to try to live without running water, is a modern day tragedy!

This is not what St. Joseph people are accustomed to and it really throws us back to the early days of the last century. The pupils of the St. Joseph Primary School are now the latest casualties of this state of affairs a mere 3 days into the school term.

It is tragic that at a time when we are busy boasting about our progress with the Millennium Development Goals, that the very thing which underpins our health and stability, running water, is now no longer guaranteed.

I agree with all who say that the availability of running water is not a political issue, but to use that as an excuse for not solving the problem, ignores the fact that my constituents cannot get water from any other source than the BWA. They cannot sink their own wells, or lay their own mains. The BWA is a monopoly and has a duty to appropriately relate to their customers, and to respond swiftly to their plight.

I am happy that the call-in programs are being inundated with calls on this issue, since my own statements on the unavailability of running water are quickly relegated to being just "the BLP criticizing the DLP administration".

Barbadians who have not been affected by the situation are now coming to understand how much we are suffering. So much so that we are receiving offers of donations of water from sympathetic citizens; and these offers are welcome, since some water is better than no water at all.

However, it is obvious that a case of bottled water does not help with flushing toilets, doing laundry, having showers, and cooking a week-day meal.

Promises were made by the Minister and these have not been fulfilled.

And to compound this disastrous failing by the Water Authority, constituents are still receiving bills like clock-work, when no water is coming through the taps.

Since December of last year, I publicly called for a rebate to be given to affected residents, and this has not been taken on board.

The BWA needs to take all steps to augment the water supply in the affected areas.

The community water tanks are not replenished as often as they should, and I am asking the BWA to commence the filling of these water tanks around the clock – 24 hours a day. You cannot tell me that it is appropriate to build a headquarters building for over 60 million dollars but that you want to balk at the hours of overtime and the wear and tear on the vehicles?

We also need to have many more community tanks provided, since this seems now to be the only option available to us.

Individuals whose bills record no water usage, should have the meter rental fee waived, and other individuals who receive below a certain minimum level of water in their taps, should receive a substantial rebate in their bills.

This problem affects all of Barbados. It affects the hygiene and productivity of a large segment of the Barbadian population. It affects their opportunities to earn through livestock rearing and vegetable farming.

It affects their quality of life.

And with Christmas around the corner, memories of last year's deprivation is already causing a feeling of despair.

It is not a political issue, it is a humanitarian issue which requires the intervention of the political directorate.

In other words, to the BWA and to the Minister responsible, DO YOUR JOB!!