

HEALTH & WELLNESS

The UPP recognizes that all healthcare facilities – from the Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre to the community clinics – are in need of repair, refurbishment and equipment upgrades. The two new polyclinics donated by the People’s Republic of China also need to be staffed, equipped and properly operationalized.

The UPP commits to tackling these problems, with the active assistance of the Medical Benefits Scheme and the Ministry of Works.

A UPP Administration’s priority areas include:

NATIONAL STRATEGIC

WELLNESS PLAN: We will consult and collaborate with the public and private sectors, NGOs, communities and special interest groups to formulate a National Strategic Plan on Wellness to devise solutions to current and expected challenges.

EXPLORE MEDICAL INSURANCE PLAN FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

Exploring the feasibility of a comprehensive Medical Insurance Plan for civil servants.

Settling outstanding payments to healthcare personnel.

Increasing the number of nurses, doctors, specialists, and support staff in the public-health system.

Deploying enough personnel and supplies to the community clinics, so that their daily/nightly operations are more efficient.

FOCUS ON MENTAL WELLNESS

A UPP Government will pursue three approaches to mental health simultaneously: before the crisis, during the crisis, and after the crisis policies.

Establish a focus on Mental Wellness NOT Mental Illness and seek to redirect the care of the mentally challenged, where possible, from institutions to community/home based care.

Construct a new modern mental healthcare facility

that vastly improves on the service delivered by the Clarevue facility.

Reassess the conversion of the Sir Cuthwyn Lake Medical Center (formerly NTTC Building at Nugent Avenue) with a view to creating a **non-residential mental-health treatment facility for at-risk youth.**

Making wellness a priority, with an emphasis on **reducing obesity** among our youth and **mental deterioration** among our seniors. Establishing dedicated exercise centres within outdoor spaces, with the input of the national sporting bodies.

Within 100 days of taking office, pass comprehensive Mental Health Legislation which codifies the rights of mental health patients, the ethical responsibilities of mental health professionals,

punishments for professional misconduct, the rules and responsibilities for the guardians of mental health patients and expands the powers of the Ministry of Health.

Conduct a review of current policies towards students' mental health, including mental health education, the availability of mental health professionals and teachers' responses to students' mental health challenges.

Intensify mental health public awareness campaigns working with The Ministry of Health and mental health professionals, using radio, television, and social media.

Facilitate more scholarships for the training of mental health professionals.

**NATIONAL SENIOR CENTER:
Create a center for recreation, education, and engagement of the retired population.**

Convert a significant part of the Holberton Hospital compound into the **Cynthia Boone-Thibou Senior Centre** with the aim of keeping our senior citizens mentally and physically active. Residents of Fiennes Institute will have access to these activities.

Establish an accreditation programme for ALL long-term care institutions, public and private.

Under the patronage of the Prime Minister, we will institute the annual Seniors' Fitness Challenge in which participants will contend for the Danny Oliver Memorial Cup and a cash prize.

COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Conduct an immediate assessment to **reduce wait time at Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre** so that corrective measures can be implemented as quickly as possible.

Healthcare must be comprehensive and looked at holistically. We will expand and **strengthen the education program on preventing substance abuse and non communicable lifestyle illnesses.**

Place more emphasis on the management and provision of treatment for Non-Communicable Diseases such as Diabetes, Hypertension, Kidney Failure, Asthma, Sickle Cell at the Poly Clinics.



Upgrade, fully equip and properly maintain all community health clinics and extend operating hours to 10 p.m.

Improve the functioning of Poly Clinics and upgrade their services to include the provision of Urgent Care into the night. Polyclinics will be equipped with the necessary equipment and specialists.

Expand Medical Benefits Scheme (MBS) coverage to include **free dental treatment** for persons under 18 and everyone in full-time education.

Expand MBS coverage to include **free eye-care** for children and everyone in full-time education.

Further expand MBS coverage for illnesses, NCDs, diagnostic procedures and medications within our first 5 years.

Set up a public-private partnership to establish an independent **Medical Endowment Fund** to assist with critical illnesses. Use tax and other incentives to encourage investors to contribute, as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility. The fund will be administered by a National Board of Trustees.

Establish a standard **minimum response time for ambulance services** and establish ambulance HQs to meet time requirements. Establish similar response time standards to ensure timely fire and police response.

Establish a **medical air-bridge** between Barbuda and Antigua, in collaboration with airplane and helicopter operators.

Improve maternal services across the healthcare system.

Make paternal leave available in line with international standards.

INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO MEDICINE ... A PARADIGM SHIFT

Include provision for traditional, contemporary medicine and preventative health. Offer nuclear/radiology medicine to address increase in demand for cancer treatment.

Invite practitioners to present a comprehensive policy paper on an integrative approach to wellness that educates the public on all relative components of lifestyle, including diet, exercise, stress management, and emotional wellbeing.

Collaborate with stakeholders on how to integrate the best of complementary medicine with the best of conventional medicine.

Institute and implement a path to accreditation for bona fide, qualified medical persons trained in complementary medical therapies.

Healthcare must be comprehensive and looked at holistically.

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REDUCE CHILDHOOD NCDS:

The shocking rise amongst the child population of chronic diseases, particularly Diabetes and Obesity, makes corrective action imperative.

We must inculcate in our children the merits and imperatives of wholesome eating and daily exercise. To this end, A UPP Government will:

In collaboration with the MBS, twin a well-planned, fun-to-do exercise regimen with the School Meals Programme. This dual approach to

bettering our children's lives will redound positively to their long-term wellness.

The UPP will support mental wellness among students by increasing the availability of trained counsellors, making such personnel accessible to all government primary and secondary schools.

CANNABIS INDUSTRY

Increase the amount of cannabis allowed for personal possession from 15 grams to 1 ounce (28 grams).

In consultation with the National Youth Council and

wider society, legislate further decriminalization of cannabis to protect our youth from senseless prosecution.

Boost the effectiveness of public health campaigns, the availability of anti-addiction support and the prevention of underage use.

Reduce the cannabis license fee to support the participation of more Antigua and Barbudan entrepreneurs in the medicinal cannabis industry.



SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Even before the pandemic, the ranks of the vulnerable and the socially dislocated were increasing alarmingly.

A society is judged by how it treats those who are most disadvantaged.

Accordingly, a government must do all it can to strengthen families and enhance their abilities to help their own. But it also has the obligation to assist those who cannot help themselves.

The UPP Administration pledges to:

IMPROVE SOCIAL SECURITY:

Work assiduously to **improve the financial health of the Social Security Scheme** in an effort to ensure that monthly pensions and other Social Security benefits are paid on time.

Immediately inject \$20 million into Social Security to stabilise the scheme and end late benefit payments.

In our fight against poverty in the post-COVID economy we will work towards **implementing inflation-indexed pensions** and other social services.

Ensure that Social Security conducts timely actuarial analyses to ensure prudent fiscal management of continued timely payments to beneficiaries..

Honor all payments on the bond issued in 2010, to keep Social Security on a long term stable footing.

Introduce the **Maintenance Of Minors (MOM) Program** to protect single-parent households from financial hardship. We will allocate 1 million dollars to a revolving fund. Low income and unemployed custodial parents can access child support payments from the fund.

Work through the Ministries of Health and Social Transformation, along with faith based organizations and civil society to **relocate and rehabilitate persons living on the street.**

Develop the capacity of the Probation Department to teach

life skills, to ensure prisoners' successful reintegration into society.

Work with international agencies to recruit and train personnel to adequately staff all departments dealing with Court matters, including drug education, domestic abuse, and runaways.

Establish a **Victims Trauma Unit** within the Ministry of Social Transformation to increase the physical and psychological assistance provided to victims of crime and disasters.

Properly fund and expand the outreach of the **Board of Guardians.**

Actively promote, support and facilitate the fostering and adoption of children.

A UPP Government will maintain or implement the following plans and programmes:

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The UPP Administration will maintain and improve the programmes it instituted — the School Meals, the School Uniform Grant, the Dollar Barrel, the PDV/CAB People’s Benefit Programme and the Senior Citizens Utility Subsidy.

Any qualifying person who was removed, arbitrarily or politically, from the People’s Benefit Programme will be reinstated.

Index-link the People’s Benefit Card to ensure greater protection to meet basic food-security standards.

Expand access to existing social programmes including the People’s Benefit Programme and

the Food Voucher Programme under the Ministry of Social Transformation

Ensure that all social programmes are conducted in a fair way, with no discrimination.

Reconstitute the School Meals Program to provide wholesome and nutritious meals, including water, for the critical development of young bodies and minds and Introduce a **School Vitamin Program.**

Working with NODS and the Red Cross, the Ministry of Social Transformation will create and operate a **Fire Relief & Resettlement Program.** This is aimed at helping displaced families to be resettled with

human dignity, as quickly as possible, and assisting them in recovery efforts. The former Barrymore Hotel will be used as temporary housing.

It will also be mandated to work more closely with NODS in the annual identification, inspection, and basic provisioning of emergency shelters, and other critical functions.

Recognizing the critical role of church ministries in social transformation, the UPP Government will **provide scholarships to assist people who qualify to pursue undergraduate degrees in religious studies** at approved universities.



NATIONAL SECURITY & JUSTICE

Public trust in the justice system has significantly eroded. While the Police and Judiciary are recognized as independent, the UPP Administration will be committed to ensuring that all residents have easy access to justice.

Prison reform will be a priority and we will focus on rehabilitating prisoners and reducing recidivism rates. While we work toward the construction of a modern prison complex, we will strive to keep persons out of prison, especially out-of-work fathers and petty criminals in need of employment.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A UPP Government will:

- Rename the Royal Antigua and Barbuda Police Force the **Antigua and Barbuda Police Service**, to reflect a new social ethos which focuses on clients and customers.
- Establish a **Civilian Complaints Review Board**.
- Establish a **Small Claims Court** so that claims under EC\$5,000 can move more quickly through the system.
- Re-establish the Magistrates' Courts in All Saints and Bolans Villages and in Parham Town.

- Increase the number of Magistrates, placing one in Barbuda.
- Facilitate year-round criminal trials in the High Court of Justice.
- Enact legislation that mandates that all hearings be held within the constitutional timelines.
- Enact legislation that provides a uniform, fair and balanced approach to the granting of bail in the Magistrates Courts.
- Work diligently to introduce **alternative sentencing** — in particular community service — for youth, first-time offenders and non-violent offenders.
- Make **skills training available to inmates** of Her Majesty's Prison through the new ABICE School of Careers and also provide online education options.
- Implement a strong pre and post-release counseling programme to ensure a smooth transition back to productive society.
- Give qualifying former inmates access to scholarships to pursue tertiary education and technical/vocational education and access to entrepreneurship programmes.
- Set up a **Landlord-Tenant Dispute Resolution Board**.
- Require all police stations to be 24/7 operations.
- Enhance the Highway Patrol Unit to better regulate the increasing road traffic and to make our roads and highways safer.
- Upgrade our Coast Guard's training and personnel and work with regional and international governments and other bodies, including the RSS, to boost our border security capacity.
- Utilize specially developed drones to secure our borders.

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- Build a police station with a holding facility in Barbuda.
- Provide mandatory training (including refreshers) for all police officers in the **handling of persons living with mental illnesses**.

Further, the safety of our people is a priority, and so a UPP Government will:

- Implement an **internationally recognized street-address system (post and/or zip code system)** within the first two years of our Administration.
- Establish **First-responder Centres** (fire tender, EMS, Police Unit) in Johnson's Point, Carty's Hill and English Harbour, to ensure that all four corners of Antigua and Barbuda can enjoy rapid response.
- **Increase the fleet of fire tenders** to no less than seven working units and ensure they are properly maintained.
- **Complete the separation of the Fire police and regular Police into two professional bodies.**
- **Establish a mutual communications platform between the EMS and Fire Department .**
- Facilitate the set-up of **auxiliary neighbourhood-patrol** units in each parish.
- Increase the number of **working street lights** throughout the constituencies, phasing in solar street lights.
- Exempt all home-security equipment from ABST.
- Ensure there is regular clearing of bushes on vacant lands in residential areas.
- Create a **Service Corps within the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force** which deploys appropriately trained soldiers to tackle civic work and service initiatives to include maintenance of government buildings.

The UPP will empower the Police Service to:

Establish a highly specialized **Anti-Crime and Narcotics Unit** using the best personnel in those fields from the Police Service and the ONDCP, with the mandate to lead the fight against serious and organized crime.

Establish a modern **Forensics Laboratory**.

Increase training in modern crime-fighting and detection methods.

Increase the number of officers within the Police Service.

Require the Police Service to organize an ongoing nationwide **Crime-Prevention Education Program**.

Implement **mandatory polygraph testing** and **psycho-social testing** of police officers before entry into the Police Service, and otherwise as required, with court sanction.

Implement continuous and rigorous physical training, mental aptitude training and medical evaluation programmes among all ranks in the Police Service, and establish training and evaluation as essential prerequisites for placement and promotion.

Provide police **full medical insurance coverage** for injuries sustained in their course of duty.

Undertake a review of the management structure and operations of all police stations.

Youth Justice

The UPP is fully committed to reducing the rising incidence of juvenile delinquency.

A New UPP Government will:

Expand the **Youth Diversion Programme** in the Police Service.

In the medium term:
Construct a modern Smart Juvenile Rehabilitation Facility - the Youth Offender Development Center - to help rehabilitate and empower both young males and females.

Enact legislation which states that offenders under the age of 21 who have not

committed a capital crime, violent crime, or gun crime, can have the opportunity, subject to appropriate conditions, of not being in detention.

Enact legislation that will **make petty offences violations, rather than crimes**, thus preventing our youth from being criminalized.

Apply existing legislation and, where necessary, **enact new legislation that provides for alternative sentencing**

options including curfew, house arrest, community service, and probation.

Domestic Violence

Enforce a **zero tolerance policy on domestic violence** against women and children.

Work with international and regional agencies to **establish a dedicated safe house** for women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

Implement an internationally recognized street-address system within the first two years of our Administration.

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IMMIGRATION

Conscious of the discrimination that some immigrants – Caribbean nationals, in particular – have endured, the UPP will enact relief measures and strengthen the systems by which they may be more comfortably incorporated into the Antigua and Barbuda society.

The UPP Government will:

Reduce the cost of passports by 50% for citizens aged 65 years and over.

OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

Consistent with our commitment to promoting unity with our Caribbean Brothers and Sisters, as demonstrated by our 2004 Millennium Naturalization Act, the New UPP Government, under our **One Caribbean Programme**, will move to **amend the Constitution to allow individuals born outside of Antigua and Barbuda, who have an Antiguan great-grandparent born in the country, to secure their Antigua and Barbuda passport by descent.**

Create a **Department of Immigrant Affairs** that is guided by a board of directors composed of prominent persons including from within immigrant communities.

Establish an **Immigrant Affairs Desk** within the Department of Immigrant Affairs that will promote the well-being of communities by overseeing the implementation of policies and programs that facilitate their successful integration.

Activate the Immigration Appeals Tribunal.

Increase the staff at the Immigration Office to target a quick turnaround time of no more than 90 days for all citizenship applications.

Allow for the application for **Family Citizenship** under a skilled migration program, where children who are minors are jointly considered with their parents. We will fast track family applications where minors are involved.

Persons who broke their residency period due to their unavoidable absence, caused by the COVID pandemic, will have no adverse immigration consequences.

WORK PERMITS

Under the “One Caribbean” Act, effective 1st March 2023, the new UPP Government will waive all work permit fees for nationals of Caricom and the Dominican Republic, who have been working and resident in Antigua and Barbuda on or before January 1st 2023.

Work permits for nationals of Caricom and the Dominican Republic will be replaced by the “One Caribbean Employment



Stamp”, which will be transferable from one employer to another, within the same industry and same job class.

Undocumented immigrants who came to this country as minors and have lived and attended primary and secondary school here, and consider Antigua and Barbuda their home, will be fast-tracked on a pathway to citizenship upon attaining the age of 18, as part of the “One Caribbean” Act.

Lower the cost of the Extension forms to \$25.00.

Discontinue the practice of requiring \$300 Extensions for specialist workers and church personnel who are seeking Work Permits, when they are already legally landed and have time in their passports.

For applications for Residency, grant a minimum of 1 year, to begin from the date the applicant’s passport is received.

ENVIRONMENT & AESTHETICS

Both residents and returning nationals complain that “this is the worst Antigua has ever looked.” And on Barbuda, there still remain remnants of the 2017 Hurricane Irma.

*Residents and visitors **deserve** to live and vacation in an environment that is clean, healthy and attractive.*

*The UPP Administration, working with communities island-wide, will ensure that the Ministries of Public Works, Health and Agriculture; the Department of Environment; the DCA; St. John’s Development Corporation; and community and civic groups undertake a five-year campaign called “**Bring Back Beautiful.**”*

*There will be **zero tolerance for littering, illegal dumping, and erecting structures that put safety and health at risk.** Littering and misuse of the beaches and marine resources will not be tolerated.*

*Antigua and Barbuda **MUST** reclaim its reputation as a place “where land and sea make beauty.”*

Therefore, A UPP Government will:

Implement the “WHERE LAND & SEA MAKE BEAUTY” CAMPAIGN.

Immediately institute a month-long clean-up campaign. This is to reduce the severe health risks which the excessive, unsightly and illegal dumping of garbage, country-wide, is posing to our collective health.

Ensure that schools and health facilities operate in a clean environment, free of litter/garbage, overgrown grass, uncleared drains etc. so as to support the wellness of students, staff and patients.

Provide employment at the community level to **ensure the streets, drains and public areas are regularly cleaned**, particularly in the City of St. John’s.

Incentivize the business community through tax trade-offs to repair and **refurbish their downtown properties.**

Work with the private sector to **transform Independence Avenue** so that it becomes not only a gateway to the business district but a “parkway” worthy of its name.

Pursue partnerships to clean, restore and transform the areas of the Country Pond and the Tanner Street gutter into an **Urban Green Space and a Joint Heritage Landmark** with foliage, benches, space for small businesses such as eateries, ice cream shops, local juices, crafts etc., and new tourism attractions.

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Create partnerships and provide incentives to businesses, including street vendors, to **improve the overall appearance and sanitation of St. John's** as the centre of commerce, working through the St. John's Development Corporation (SJDC) and the Chamber of Commerce.

Properly maintain the St. John's Harbor as an attractive waterfront for residents and tourists to enjoy.

Maintain the environs of the V.C. Bird International Airport to provide an attractive welcome for visitors and returning residents.

Improve the maintenance and aesthetic appeal of all cemeteries, our ancestors' resting places.

All new home constructions will be encouraged to plant at least two new trees on their allotted land.

Increase the number of recyclable refuse collection sites across the country, where people can dispose of perishables, paper and plastic, etc., in separate receptacles.

ESTABLISH PARKS & COMMUNITY GREEN SPACES IN VILLAGES ACROSS THE ISLAND

Establish a Public Parks Authority (not to be confused with the re-imagined National Parks and Heritage Authority) that is responsible for the development and maintenance of well maintained and safe parks for the empowerment of youth, the well-being of senior citizens, the advancement of cultural activities, and the promotion of sustainable tourism.

Develop Heroes Park into an actual park deserving of its name – to include a memorial to the 88 enslaved Africans executed in the 1736 rebellion and a museum exhibiting legacy materials of past political leaders.

Revitalize the Botanical Gardens as an attractive public green space to include installing displays of sculpture, placing markers identifying our unique plant life, the holding of annual exhibitions of aromatic and flowering plants and the provision of designated areas for entertainment and refreshment.

Plant a Million Trees Campaign. This will be an exercise to substantially reforest Antigua, where individuals, schools and other organizations will be encouraged to engage in ongoing tree planting exercises throughout the country.

Pursue a public/private partnership to fund the building of a **public open-air performing arts theatre.**

Work with the Transport Board and bus associations to **enhance both bus terminals** to include the installation of technologies such as using GPS to indicate the arrival time of buses.

