



BHTA Annual General Meeting 22nd June, 2016

Remarks by Roseanne Myers

Protocol having been established - Good morning members of the board and members of the BHTA, and other distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

It is truly an honour and distinct pleasure in this the 64th year in the life of the association to stand before you to say, I address you today in my capacity as the Chairman of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association.

What Basil Forbes Senior, Sue Yellin, May Hinds and others started in the early 1990's, a few years later Peter Odle expanded to effect the name change from BHA to BHTA and embrace an industry that already included the Direct Tourism Services members (car rentals, attractions, destination management companies etc). **Mr. Chatrani our immediate past President and board completed** the process one year ago and the rest will be history. **Mr. Chatrani, thank you for your firm resolve to see it to the end.** Not only is a non hotel member sitting in the Chair today but we saw several more vying for senior positions also. An association that seemed to reserve leadership positions for some and exclude many sent signals that added to a negative perception that we do not want to perpetuate. So we move on to a situation where the best person should win. A united association is a healthy association and projects a positive image. We have to find ways to keep it so and to further embrace all our membership as we go forward.

Please let me make it clear, today is historic because a person, who is a non hotelier, has finally risen to the Chair of the Barbados Hotel and Tourism Association. Is it however novel that a tourism practitioner should be able to assume the leadership of a tourism association in an industry that has been long about more than just hotels? It certainly is not because we have suddenly become more capable or more suitable than before, but we have now become eligible under the constitution. The former two were never in question. The association can now move forward to attract the best talent possible to lead and to articulate issues of common interest to all and of specific interest to some where appropriate. Leadership does not require the individual to know all there is to know about any subsector but certainly that you know where to find the correct information, you need know who to ask for help - and then to present that information as though you are a long time expert. **Competence, confidence, time and the ability to advocate are all required skills. None are determined by who your**

employer is. We are grateful to our hotel partners who have lead us through the last 64 years and whose dedication and dollars spent in the industry have been and continue to be vital. We will continue to advocate for their interest among others as most of the revenue earned and employment is through them. As I look around I see a number of young people who have equal ability and who should have equal opportunity to participate going forward. The ground work has been laid. Your job is to become familiar with the industry and through the association, spend time associating with others. It is the easiest way to learn about a cross section of businesses.

The primary task as we go forward, at the stage where the association celebrates 64 years and the island celebrates 50 years, is to reassess our mandate. Why does the organisation exist? What is our role as part of Team Barbados?

The BHTA is a member based organisation with membership from across the wide spectrum of the tourism sector, required to advocate on their behalf and work hand in hand with all the other major tourism agencies, to sustain our economy and society. We are a pivotal player in determining the economic fortunes of this island so we cannot move with malaise and apathy. **At this juncture, as we turn the corner after the worst recession in our history, in-order to further invigorate the economy, we ourselves must be invigorated.**

The last several months have been spent thinking deeply about the interaction between leadership and management. The lecture hosted by UWI a few months ago entitled the “Economics of Leadership”, was pertinent and very timely, in preparing for this role. An unpaid, voluntary position but an opportunity to give back to an industry that have given me so much. I have met with almost all of the BHTA past presidents, attended almost all of the hotel and DTS category meetings and visited a number of the major brands across the island. I am committed to continuing this exercise. I have listened to how members run their businesses and what they expect from their membership. Most of us share a passion for the industry, that is clear.

I have formulated the following thoughts regarding our priorities for the next two years but will ratify a plan once we convene the first board meeting next week.

Job #1 – We must improve the engagement with our members. We must become more member centric adding value to those who pay subscriptions, following up with those we have not seen for a while. Active and meaningful participation by members is critical to our survival and we have seen the diming of the lights in that regard. So engagement has to be measured,

and to become the focus of the new board. Strategies to retain and grow membership will be pivotal to our future success.

Job #2 – Complete the institutional strengthening of the BHTA. How can we do so to ensure we are positioned to bring added benefit to members? What should we stop doing, start doing and continue to do? With Sue's resignation comes the task of finding a replacement and as herculean a task as that may be we have to do so while still serving the needs of the association. The new CEO will need to develop the Strategic Plan for the association, to ensure we are results oriented, and guided by key performance indicators to take us into the future. The organisation has to immediately start the process of evaluating how to strengthen the value proposition. What data on our membership should we be tracking?

Job #3 – Re-examine the processes employed and bring to full fruition the benefits of the incentives (concessions) given by the government. The intent was to create a more enabling environment for business by addressing the issue of the cost of doing business. The objective is to make the destination more competitive and keep the product refreshed. Implementation has been slow and painful. I recommit to work with our public sector counterparts at all levels to devise a system that is seamless and transparent that will make Barbados one of the most attractive places to invest and operate. The process to access incentives given to refurbish, or import all of the identified food and beverage products duty free and to access the 7.5 % as a direct tourism service, is at present like the 11 plus, Maths paper one and two, English A and B, multiple choice and the essay paper. It is laborious and inefficient. **We can do better** than this and must work harder to achieve results using a more strategic approach.

In a similar vein we have a number of very important issues to complete the BWU agreement that are still outstanding and some issues with the ERA and Shop's Act that need to be addressed. My wish and hope is that we can sit with our trade unions partners and speak about topics other than the union agreement but to expend some time and energy looking at how we can deal with the havoc that NCD's Non Communicable Diseases are wreaking across the population and our work force.

Job #4- Enhance the marketing efforts of our members in order to drive more high yielding business. Using our collective strength to facilitate joint marketing projects within the categories to ensure that locally, regionally and internationally the full list of membership services are known and accessible. **We have some work to do at the Luxury end to mirror what the Intimates have done at the other end of the spectrum.** We must let all our local partners as well as overseas entities never forget that the BHTA is open for business year round from all sources including the diaspora, Caribbean, and local residents and through all sources.

The BHTA is open for partnerships with cultural industry practitioners be it entertainers, promoters, event planners. We must forge those partnerships and set operating standards.

Job #5 – Research and development. The industry has some long standing problems, some of which our members in the banking and finance sectors need to assist us with. Accessing capital still is a major hurdle. The correspondent banking dilemma is a new hurdle. Competition is coming from all angles and we need research to help us anticipate, respond and advocate. I commit to meeting with the UWI, and dusting off the MOU to flesh out at least one research question to be answered that keeps us looking at the big picture.

Through it all and by our actions to embrace all our members and utilise our collective strength, can we start to change the perception of the BHTA and by extension the industry that sometimes we love to hate? That is Job #6

We are going to try. This organisation needs to be seen as driving the economic benefits of a sustainable tourism sector, providing decent employment and encouraging the concept that tourism is an exchange of cultures. This is the time that we need to provide a platform for the emerging tourism leaders across the sector and let them ride on the shoulders of the stalwarts. We need to tell the stories of successful tourism entrepreneurs and the role that women have played in the success of this sector etc. etc. This industry has been given a lot of natural blessings and to whom much is given much is expected. So we have lots of work to do.

On behalf of the newly appointed board of the BHTA we commit to dedicating the time and objective thinking to turn passion into action to the benefit of the BHTA and by extension our beloved country Barbados, as we try to leave the recession behind and look forward positively and energetically beyond 50. **I thank my family, my children Alanna and Marcus who are here today, my dear husband Donovan whose support keeps me mentally and physically healthy, my mother Stephney and siblings Veronica, Shelley, Andrea and Edward and my Atlantis Submarines family here in Barbados and here today and those in Vancouver, for their outstanding support** throughout the years and commitment to do so going forward. To the many, many persons throughout the BHTA family especially **Cicely Walcott** that continue to give me wise counsel and support, I thank you for your attendance here today and for the pledge of involvement in the work of the association going forward. Ask not what the association can do for you, if you have not already asked yourself, what can I do for the association?

Good morning and thank you for your attention.