

GRAEME HALL NATURE SANCTUARY, INC.

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The Future of Graeme Hall: Setting the Record Straight

[*Christ Church*, BARBADOS, February 14, 2010] The Government of Barbados has not responded to requests for constructive meetings with the owner of Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary to discuss the future of Graeme Hall in over a year.

"Except for an introductory meeting in January 2009 with Minister Denis Lowe of the Ministry of Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, nobody from government has called back and agreed to substantive meetings," said Stuart Heaslet, the owner's representative for the Sanctuary. "This is despite our outreach efforts and multiple trips to Barbados."

"We have personal knowledge that Minister Lowe cares deeply about the future of Graeme Hall and the people of Barbados. Minister Lowe knows that we are available at any time, and we agree with him that talking together in good faith about a way forward would be welcome."

As to government's claim that the final say in the reopening of the facility would be completely up to the owner of the Sanctuary:

"We believe that conclusion is not accurate," said Heaslet. "The Sanctuary investment and survival depends unconditionally on a healthy ecosystem. A healthy ecosystem is impossible under the current circumstances that are controlled by Government."

"Because of the government-run sluice gate being in total disrepair for years, the ecosystem is dying. And because of government policy to dump sewage and allow continuous pollution to run into the wetland, the ecosystem is dying. And now all environmental buffers and adjoining parklands have been rezoned for urban development in the new Physical Development Plan. Both Government and the Sanctuary are stakeholders, it's not just up to the Sanctuary to preserve the ecosystem and parklands at Graeme Hall."

Heaslet disagreed with Minister Lowe's claim that Government offered a million dollars to the Sanctuary to save jobs.

"No offer or proposal detailing terms and conditions of such an offer ever came to the Sanctuary from Government. Long after the Sanctuary closed and employees were laid off we did read a press article about a million dollar budget for Graeme Hall, but nobody from Government ever talked to us about what it was for or how it would work."

Heaslet confirmed that nearly 6 months have gone by without Government acknowledgement of a Treaty dispute filed by owner Peter Allard under the *Agreement For The Promotion and Reciprocal Protection of Investments* between Canada and Barbados. The dispute alleges that the Government of Barbados has violated its international obligations by refusing to enforce its environmental laws, thereby allowing increased pollution and land development to damage the Sanctuary. (www.graemehall.com/legal/papers/BIT-Complaint.pdf)

"Our message to Government is that we will meet with them when they are ready," said Heaslet.

Since 1994 the owner of the Sanctuary has invested more than US \$35 million in the 35-acre Sanctuary to preserve the last significant mangrove woodland and wetland on the island.

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