Press Statement

The Hon. Glenn A. Blakeney, JP MP
Minister of Youth, Families and Sports

Update on Aquatics Centre at NSC
National Sports Centre
11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 27th 2012

Good Morning!

I am standing in the middle of this splendid aquatics facility, and as the Minister responsible for Sports it is indeed a moment of true pride and a sense of real accomplishment. Early next year when this Olympic-sized swimming pool is filled to capacity, it will hold nearly 900,000 gallons of water!

There are many persons in our community who no doubt will take advantage of this 50-meter pool. People such as Roy-Allan Burch, who competed in the 50 meter freestyle during the London Summer Olympics; or Kiera Aiken, Julian Fletcher and Lisa Blackburn who have all set Bermuda national swimming records; or our many young
Swimmers, such as the members of our Bermuda National Swim Team, whom brought home a staggering total of 12 medals from the 2012 Carifta Swimming Championships, held in the Bahamas during April of this year. That swim team set an awesome 51 personal best times and one national record, and had among them, none other than Jesse Washington, who won a total of seven medals for Bermuda.

Whilst I expect that competitive swimmers will welcome the opportunity to use this marvelous facility, it is very important to emphasize that it is not intended that it become exclusively the domain of elite athletes. In this regard, we envisage that the Aquatics Centre will become a major hub for community-based aquatic activities including recreational swimming for youth, seniors, schoolchildren and other members of our community.

A deliberate effort will be made to integrate programming to accommodate a full range of aquatic uses. I am confident that in time we will see aquatic events like platform diving, water polo and synchronized swimming gain in popularity, so that we have increasing numbers of participants as well as spectators. Moreover, I am proud to boast that our most recent Olympic diver, Ms. Katura Horton-Perinchief
currently serves as a member of our National Sports Centre ‘Board of Trustees.

So there’s no better time than Now to inspire a new generation of divers with Olympic aspirations and this ‘First Class’ facility forms part of the essential infrastructure to make that happen and yet another genuine example of Government’s commitment to ensuring that the Best interests of Bermuda and indeed Bermudians are first and foremost.

The National Sports Centre’s aquatics programming goals will include a unique blend of aquatic skill acquisition and development, catering to novices and accomplished swimmers alike. The programming plan will be designed to stimulate and sustain interest in swimming and aquatics, whilst ensuring safety.

The focus will be on 2 major goals:

1. To provide an optimum blend of programming that provides for all aquatics needs of the Bermuda community. This will include various levels of programming ranging from “learn to swim”, fun recreational
activities, and fitness programming, lap swimming, through to
development and refinement of competitive aquatic skills.
2. To develop an integrated system that attracts users to the National
Sports Centre. The Board will work diligently to develop relationships
with aquatics clubs, rehabilitation service providers and others to nurture
swimmers who will enjoy a fun safe swimming environment. Two
additional key strategies will be to become an athlete feeder for clubs to
foster growth and long term athlete development. Moreover, our
National Sports Centre will further become an international aquatics
training and competition destination.

Within the first year operation, the Aquatics Centre at the National
Sports Centre will offer swim lessons, aquatic fitness classes, lap
swimming, and rehabilitation services, introduce sport development and
training modules for water polo, diving and synchronized swimming as
well as offer support to Masters, Triathlon and competitive swimming.
The pool will host events, meets, and parties and rent lane space to clubs
so they can further develop and grow their membership base.

At this time I wish to take the opportunity to publicly thank and express
my profound gratitude to the National Sports Centre Board of Trustees,
especially its Chairman Mr. Sean Tucker, for a stellar job in managing the construction of this superb Aquatics Centre. I must also extend heartfelt thanks to the entire workforce who helped to construct this facility using superior craftsmanship. I am equally pleased to note that there has been a great balance of foreign expertise and highly skilled local tradespersons employed on this magnificent project.

We are planning to hold an official reception here at the Aquatics Centre in the very near future so that key stakeholders can see for themselves what a truly fantastic facility this is.

The Aquatics Centre forms part of our vision for continued expansion of the National Sports Centre in order to establish a comprehensive sports complex that will enable the staging of world-class sporting and entertainment events. Our long-term objective is to promote maximum use of the National Sports Centre through carefully planned sports and event programming. As such, we see the National Sports Centre as a jewel in our crown of sports infrastructure that will support Government’s goal of becoming a major Sport Tourism destination.
Thank you.