

STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

MAYOR EVELIO R. LEONARDIA

City of Bacolod

September 8, 2008

My beloved people of Bacolod, **today . . . we make history!**

Today, for the first time, we report to you from the Bacolod City Government Center. Over the past 50 years, this facility was dreamed of by generations of public servants before us. Now, it is a reality.

There are so many people to thank for this dream come true. First, may we reiterate our grateful thanks to the descendants of Don Padoc Gonzaga for their generous donation of the 5-hectare land on which this Government Center now stands. When the property was donated to the city in 2006, it was then worth about P140 million. At present, it is surely worth much more than that.

When the donation of the land was finalized in June, 2006, we were given only 6 months thereafter to start the construction work, otherwise, the donation would be rescinded and the land reverted back to the donor.

If you were the City Mayor then, would you have thrown up your hands in defeat and given up right there and then, knowing that it would be next to impossible to comply within only 6 months all government procedures required for any construction project, especially one of this magnitude?

But to give up without even trying would have been to betray the people we have sworn to serve. We would have been criminally negligent had we lost through default an ideally-located property worth P140 million then for the Government Center. So despite almost insurmountable difficulties, especially the scuttling of the original loan to fund the project, and yes, even court cases to stop the project from proceeding, we carried on and now, we have this Government Center as a legacy to our people - - a landmark they can be proud of for generations to come.

Had we wavered in this resolve to finish the project, the dream for a Bacolod City Government Center would have remained just that - - a dream.

This legacy to our people would not have also been realized without the full support of the Sangguniang Panlungsod. For sharing this vision and their unstinting support, we thank most gratefully the previous Sangguniang

Panlungsod headed by then Vice-Mayor Renecito Novero and the present Sangguniang Panlungsod headed by Vice-Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson. Without their cooperation, encouragement, and legislative help, the project would have been lost too.

May we also acknowledge the hard work of all our other city officials and employees who in one way or another, were responsible for the success of the project. They are many and we cannot name them all. But they will be honored later in more appropriate circumstances.

May we also thank Hilmarc's Construction Corporation, the contractor for the project. We were able to beat the deadline for the start of the construction work, literally by the skin of our teeth, only because Hilmarc's came to the rescue. Even without yet receiving from the city government a single centavo for mobilization fund as stipulated in our contract with them, Hilmarc's started construction on December 28, 2006 and sustained the project during the first few months using their own funds while the city had to look for a substitute lender as the original loan with Land Bank of the Philippines was scuttled by a case filed against the contract with Hilmarc's by people whose political agenda was to sabotage the project at all costs.

May we not also forget to thank the many citizens and friends who came forward in their personal capacities to offer us encouragement and moral support just so that in moments of discouragement, we were comforted and assured that the great silent majority of our people wanted this Government Center finished as soon as possible.

We know there are a handful of people, some well-meaning but many others with doubtful motives, who say that the loan taken to construct the Government Center should have been spent on something else that the city needs. Well, as the Good Book says, there is a time for everything under the heavens. It was time for the Government Center to be built. We could not miss the golden opportunity. We ask these people to understand that the donation of the land came with a special condition which forced us to construct quickly or lose both the opportunity and a valuable property that was like a "hulog ng langit" to use a local expression for a God-given grace received so unexpectedly. Should we spurn such a gift?

No, we did not, and in return, we have this Government Center to serve our people better.

And as circumstances would have it, we did not only meet the deadline to start construction "by the skin of our teeth", we also finished it "by the skin of our teeth" – just before prices of construction materials spiraled. If we build this same structure now, we would probably need another P100 million more!

This brings us to the allegations raised by our political opponents that the Government Center is overpriced. May I inform you that the COA Regional Office has already rendered an official verdict on this issue. In answer to a request of COA-Bacolod Office, the COA Regional Office thru its Technical Services Office evaluated the structural, architectural, sanitary/plumbing, electrical and mechanical aspects of the Government Center project and based on their evaluation, they have found that the contract price of P394,957,121.01 for the Government Center is **REASONABLE**. This official finding of the COA technical people should therefore put to rest this issue of overpricing. Any contrary opinion of other parties can only be speculative or even malicious.

As for me and for the members of the Sangguniang Panlungsod and other city officials who stuck it out and made this dream a reality, we are now facing 13 cases relating to the Government Center Project. This is net of 1 case that was already dismissed. Enemies of this project have promised to file more. So be it. Despite the efforts of these "torpedoes" and "saboteurs", we believe that this majestic Government Center is worth fighting for.

Talk about the Government Center now leads us to highlight other accomplishments achieved over the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008.

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

First, on fiscal management, we have continued to manage our finances well and to operate within our means.

When we started our term in mid-2004, the General Fund Budget for that year was only P618 million. It rose to P648 million in 2005 and to P675 million in 2006. Again, it grew to P755 million in 2007. For this year, in 2008, we finally hit the **P1 billion** mark -- the first time ever that this has happened in the history of our city. This is a hefty increase of P245 million or 32% over the previous year.

Growing by 62% from a general fund budget of P618 million to P1 billion in just 4 years is no mean feat. It is a pretty good indicator of the rapid growth and progress of our city and the healthy business climate spawned by our developmental efforts to produce the "enabling environment" needed by business to grow.

Budgets of local government units or LGUs are funded from 2 sources: the Internal Revenue Allotment or IRA which is their share in revenues of the national government and from local fees and taxes that the LGUs themselves can legally impose. About 90% of LGUs nation-wide are IRA-dependent for the lion's share of their funding. For many years, Bacolod was not an exception.

Our locally-generated funds were always much smaller than our IRA. But in 2008, for the first time ever, the funding mix has been reversed. We expect to fund our P1 billion budget with an IRA of P479 million and local funds of P521 million. This is another first in our history as a city when our local sources are expected to exceed the IRA amount! We hope this trend will continue in the future.

How much have we collected on these fund sources for the first 6 months of 2008? Of our expected IRA share of P479 million for the year, we have already received 50% as of June 30, 2008. Of target collections of P260.5 million from local sources for the first 6 months of 2008, we have already collected P368 million or an excess of P107.5 million over target. This is a collection efficiency of 141%!

What are our sources for local funds? We have several but the primary ones are business tax collections and land tax collections. How are we doing on our collection efforts from these 2 primary sources?

The slide on the screen shows that for the first 6 months of 2007, our business tax collections registered at P143 million. For the same period in 2008, it grew to P161 million. That is a 13% improvement. On the other hand, our land tax collections stood at P65 million during the first 6 months of 2007 while it improved to P81 million or by 25% during the first 6 months of 2008.

Over-all, the next slide will show that in 2006, while the General Fund Budget was approved at P675 million, our actual collections from IRA and local sources totaled P761 million or P86 million better than budget. In 2007, while the General Fund Budget was approved at P755 million, our actual collections from IRA and local sources totaled P887 million or P132 million in excess of budget. For this year, we are hopeful that our actual collections should at least hit the budgeted billion mark despite the pinch that we are now all feeling from the continuing price hike on gasoline, other petroleum products and basic commodities.

Our tax collection efforts have been quite successful that no less than the BIR itself gave Bacolod City the "Top BIR Supporter Award" last March, 2008.

May we now acquaint you with the status of our PNB Term Loan that was taken to finance the construction of the Government Center. The total amount of loan approved was P400 million. However, we will limit actual availments thereon to only P394,957,121.01 which is the contract price with Hilmarc's Construction Corp. Of this amount, P338.3 million have already been availed of and paid to the contractor as of June 30, 2008. This loan is payable over 15 years.

On the other hand, as far as payables to and receivables from Ceneco are concerned, the latest figures reaching my office indicate that Ceneco owes Bacolod City P190 million in franchise taxes and real property taxes. On the other hand, Ceneco is billing us P214 million for electric bills. We are hopeful that a compromise settlement on this matter will be made soon.

We are currently preparing our 2009 Budget Proposal for decision of the Sangguniang Panlungsod. Despite the recent downturn in the economy with the sharp increases in gasoline and food prices, we project that we can still submit a budget proposal of another P1 billion with a 5% increase for next year.

We would like to recognize the hard work of our Finance Task Force under the leadership of City Administrator, Dr. Rogelio Balô, with Private Secretary to the Mayor, Mr. Jose Villanueva, and all the various revenue-generating units of the city government, major ones of which are the Business Permits and Licensing Office, Land Tax and License Divisions of the City Treasurer's Office, Office of the Building Official, City Planning and Development Office, Bacolod Traffic Authority Office and Socio-economic Enterprise Unit. Please keep up the good work.

We would also like to commend our City Treasurer, City Budget Officer, City Assessor, City Accountant and MASO Head for helping us manage our finances carefully and prudently.

However, no matter how good we are at revenue-generation, we still cannot spend what we collect unless the Sangguniang Panlungsod gives its approval. We would therefore like to thank the Sangguniang Panlungsod led by Vice-Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson for supporting our programs with funding appropriations. The help of Councilor Al Victor Espino, Chairman of the SP Committee on Finance and Appropriations, has been indispensable in this area. And for that, we would like to thank him.

Above all, we thank all the Bacolod taxpayers who have made our city grow and progress with their support.

SPURS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Investment Promotions/Job-Generation

Fully aware that we need to continue spurring economic activities in our city to provide more income and job opportunities for our people, we pursued our investment promotions initiatives which led to the following positive highlights:

FIRST: 4 corporations availed of the tax incentives provided for in the Bacolod Investment Code. These are Supervalve, Inc., Mainstream Business, Inc., 722 Realty, Inc. and Southern Fishing Ventures, Inc. – Bacolod Planta Hotel.

SECOND: Convergys, one of the big IT companies in the world, opened a branch which will provide another 1,800 new jobs for a start. Together with Teletech, Teleperformance, Focus Pacific Communications, Intervoice, and now, Convergys, these IT companies in Bacolod would account for about 4,200 employees already. Even at an average monthly salary of only P15K per employee, this would mean that an additional P63 million worth of purchasing power is being injected monthly into the Bacolod economy or P756 million annually from these IT companies alone.

This development resulted from the work of the joint public-private sector IT Focus Team with Councilor Jocelle Batapa-Sigue, Chairman of the SP Committee on Communication & Energy. Our efforts in this endeavor were recognized by the NEDA and the Regional Development Council of Region 6 when it declared our Bacolod Information Technology Investment Program as the “Best Public Sector Project for 2006-2007 in the City LGU Category in Region 6”. To the IT Focus Team, congratulations and thank you.

THIRD: There has been a steady increase in additional jobs generated. In 2005, there were 2,708 new businesses registered with an initial employment of 5,900. In 2006, this grew to 3,856 new businesses with an initial employment of 6,985 people. In 2007, there were 2,825 new businesses with an initial employment of 8,105 people. During the first half of 2008, 2,517 new businesses were registered with an initial employment of 9,400 people.

Among the recently-opened businesses of notable size are: Planta Hotel, 722 Realty, Inc., Metrodome Commercial Complex, New Pavilion Hotel, 888 Chinatown Square, Convergys, Northwest Inn, MO2 Westown Hotel, Caribbean Water Park and Resotel and Casa Marabella.

Other new large business enterprises undergoing construction now are East Point Hotel near Lopue’s East, the commercial building of Triangle Island Plaza Corporation at the Capitol Shopping area, the extension of L’Fisher Hotel, and the 3-storey commercial building of the Centrum Agri-Business Realty Corporation almost opposite the Doctors’ Hospital.

For all these achievements, may I commend the Local Investment Board and our Permits and Licensing Division officials and staff.

With the recent sharp downturn in the economy resulting from the world-wide oil price crisis, we can only pray that our businessmen survive the financial crunch so that they can continue to operate and keep their employees.

In 2006, we were adjudged “Most Business-Friendly City in Visayas” by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry. This award then landed us as one of the top 4 “Most Business-Friendly Cities in the Philippines”. Our “committed efforts” to maintain this status in 2007 as the most business-friendly city earned us a new commendation last September 8, 2007 from the Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Metro Bacolod Chamber of Commerce & Industry during its 16th Visayas Area Business Conference at the Sugarland Hotel.

On October 26, 2007, we were recognized for the second consecutive year as the “Most Business-friendly City in Visayas”. . During the 33rd Philippine Business Conference and Expo of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce & Industry at the Manila Hotel, we were proclaimed, to our jubilation, as the “Most Business-friendly City in the Philippines” – not just one of the top 4 as in the previous year but as no. 1 this time! This award was handed to us by no less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo during the ceremonies.

This was the first time ever that we were recognized as the most business- friendly city in the country. It set our spirits high and our optimism soared. We thought that this was a great push for the momentum to move Bacolod City even faster forward.

As of this report cut-off date of June 30, 2008, we were confident that we could win this award again. However, after June 30, 2008, we were dismayed to realize that we will be unable to vie for the award this year because the required endorsement from the Metro Bacolod Chamber of Commerce & Industry did not come. We truly regret this development.

We requested for this endorsement because we believe that the factors needed to win investor confidence were in place. . . factors like the continued dynamism in our local economy, favorable peace and order situation, availability of trained and educated manpower, tax incentives, infrastructures like the new Government Center for better public service, and others more like it. These were the strong points that helped us win in the previous 2 years.

However, our request was not officially answered by the association. We only learned from newspaper reports that this endorsement was not made because the members of this business association wanted sidewalk vendors removed despite the fact that we won the most business-friendly city award twice previously with sidewalk vendors already present in our city streets long before. We even won over our closest competitor, Marikina City, which people say, has no sidewalk vendors.

Anyway, since we could not get the endorsement, we had to forego vying for the award.

However, we believe we could have successfully defended our status as the most-business friendly city in the country if we were given the chance to try. Had we won again, we would have gained another competitive edge over other LGUs in attracting more inward investments. These investments and new businesses are extremely necessary to provide jobs for our people, especially the thousands that our colleges and universities graduate every year.

While other LGUs spend millions to advertise and promote themselves to tourists and potential investors, we, on the other hand, by force of circumstances beyond our control, lost the opportunity to do the same **for free**. Had we vied for the award and won again, we would have gotten free publicity in national newspapers and business magazines. And as a consistent winner, Bacolod City would have earned top-of-mind recall from potential investors.

Nevertheless, we will continue to explore areas of collaboration with our business community to discuss their concerns so that even if we may not agree on all things, we can understand and respect each other's point of view. While we acknowledge that there are sectors complaining about sidewalk vendors, we also recognize that these marginalized people must continue to earn a livelihood no matter how humble. Depriving them of a means to live can also affect the well-being of our city in general. Our challenge therefore, is how to find a wise solution that can be acceptable to all concerned sectors. All things considered however, we are very confident that an overwhelming majority of our businessmen are still "government-friendly".

Another office in charge of **helping find jobs** for our people is the PESO Office. During the year ending June 30, 2008, they held 4 jobs fairs. They also registered 23,199 job applicants, mostly for blue-collar jobs. Of this, 16,949 were applicants for local jobs and 6,250 for overseas placements. We are happy to report that 90% of applicants for local jobs and 46% of overseas applicants were placed and deployed.

Our PESO Office was also able to hire 856 poor but deserving students for summer jobs, helped 645 mobile passporting applicants and took care of 543 city scholars enrolled in various schools in our city.

For these achievements, our PESO Office was adjudged by the Department of Labor and Employment last October 16, 2007 as "Best Regional PESO Implementor, Highly Urbanized City Category" which qualified us for the same award on the national level.

We were also the first LGU in Visayas to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority or POEA to establish an Anti-illegal Recruitment Task Force.

All these achievements would not have been possible without the hard work of the officials and staff of the PESO Office. We would like to congratulate and thank them all for this great service to the city.

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING

Let us go to **another economic multiplier** - - that of **public infrastructure spending**.

Over the past year ending June 30, 2008, a total of 275 public infrastructure projects worth P552.9 million were undertaken. Of this, 206 projects worth P78.6 million were completed while 69 projects worth P474.3 million are still on-going. This includes the government center project.

The next slide will show **completed major projects with a cut-off amount of P1 million and up**. There are 25 on the list. We will mention only the first 5 for brevity. You can look at the screen for the rest or refer later to copies of this report that will be distributed.

COMPLETED PROJECTS (P 1 million & up only)	COST
Const. of Outer-Circumferential Ave. (Phase 3)	P 3.4 M
Conc. of Road Connecting Las Palmas to Circumferential Road	P 2.3 M
Const. - 77 units Artesian Wells @ various brgys.	P 2.1 M
Const. of North Road @ New Gov. Center	P 1.9 M
Installation of Traffic Lights @ Lizares-Araneta Sts.	P 1.9 M
Concreting of Lacson St. Ext.	P 1.9 M
Installation of Traffic Lights @ Libertad Ext. – Bangga Cory	P 1.9 M
Widening of Luzuriaga St., Reclamation Area	P 1.8 M
Repair and Maint. of 225 Artesian Wells at various brgys.	P 1.5 M
Concreting of Roads at Prk. San Dionisio	P 1.5 M
Tourism Lights along Taculing Road	P 1.5 M
Installation of Street Lights along Lacson Ext .	P 1.5 M
Const. of Footbridge at Magsungay	P 1.5 M
Const. of Concrete Footwalk @ Various Brgys.	P 1.4 M
Const. - 40 units Artesian Wells @ various brgys.	P 1.2 M
Const. of Tourism Lights along Gonzaga St. from Lacson St.	P 1 M
Rehabilitation of Streetlights	P 1 M
Electrical lighting at various City Streets	P 1 M
Rehab. of 150 units Artesian Wells @ various brgys.	P 1 M
Const. of Traffic Lights along BS Aquino Drive, La Salle	P 1 M
Repair of Bacolod City Mental Health Building	P 1 M
Impvt. of De La Rama Drive	P 1 M
Repair/Maintenance of Manokan Country	P 1 M
Impvt. of road leading to Dumpsite	P 1 M
Impvt./Repair of Basketball goals @ various brgys.	P 1 M

On the other hand, **ongoing major projects with a cut-off amount of P1 million and up** are on the next slide. There are 16 of them. Again, we will mention only the first 3 for brevity. The other details are on the slide and on copies of this report which will be distributed later.

ON-GOING PROJECTS (P 1 million & up only)	COST
Bacolod City Government Center	P 395 M
Const. of Outer-Circumferential Road	P 10 M
Dredging and clearing of waterways at Mandalagan	P 10 M
Const. of Southbound Perimeter Fence & Other Facilities	P 5.5 M
Coastal Road Linkage to Talisay @ Sibucan, Banago	P 5 M
Concreting of South Road at Govt. Center	P 3.7 M
Const. of Outer-Circumferential Ave. (Phase 2)	P 3.5 M
Concreting of North Road at Govt. Center (Phase 2)	P 3.3M
Concreting of Mars Street, Brgy. Taculing	P 2 M
Improv./ Restoration of existing street/barangay lights	P 2 M
Const. of 65 artesian wells @ various barangays	P 2 M
Const. of traffic lights @ Burgos Ext. Circumferential Rd.	P 1.9 M
Improvement of Doña Juliana Drive	P 1.9 M
Installation of traffic lights @ Bata-Lacson Streets	P 1.8 M
Const. of Single-Barrel Box Culvert @ Circumferential Rd.	P 1.6 M
Widening/Improv. of C. Hilado Highway fronting Govt. Center	P 1.5 M

One project we wish to highlight is the completion of the road connecting Las Palmas Subdivision to the Circumferential Road. This project now provides an alternate and shorter route to the Government Center and the Lopue's East area from City Heights, Doña Juliana Heights, Sharina Heights, Lopez Jaena St., Gonzaga Bridge and Barangays 27 and 28. Motorists from the inner parts of the city going to the Government Center area can now avoid the traffic along Libertad Extension and save about 2 kilometers of travel using the new route.

We wish to acknowledge and thank the officials, staff and employees of our City Engineer's Office for their hard work. We expect more achievements from them this year.

PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION

In addition to public infrastructure spending, **private construction projects** also boosted our local economy.

The Office of the Building Official or OBO reported that for the year ending June 30, 2008, private construction aggregated P1.3 billion with 846 building permits issued. On these private construction projects, the city was able to collect P20 million in regulatory fees and zoning clearance fees, up by 10.5% over that of the immediately preceding 12 months.

We would like to recognize the officials and staff of the OBO for looking after the needs of private construction projects. An inflow of P1.3 billion into the money stream in our city is something to crow about, and especially because, at the rate we are going, 2008 would be the fourth consecutive year when private construction projects will be maintained at a high level of over a billion pesos a year. Can you imagine how much of this money circulated among our people several times during the period to perk up our economy?

This, again, is testimony to the favorable business climate prevailing in our city.

LIVELIHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Let us now look into our efforts on livelihood development - another spur to our economy.

In line with our thrust to **improve micro-economic enterprises** as part of our anti-poverty campaign, our City Cooperative and Livelihood Development Office or CCLDO provided financial assistance of P500K to 12 cooperatives with 1,528 beneficiaries for projects such as upholstery-making, rice trading and retailing, micro-lending, hollow blocks making, swine fattening and water refilling.

Also in various stages of processing are funding applications worth P1.4 million of 19 other cooperatives with 2,253 beneficiaries for projects such as vulcanizing, egg production, swine dispersal, vermi-culture, water refilling and purifying.

53 entrepreneurial skills training sessions were also conducted for various barangays on soap-making, meat processing, fashion jewelry and accessories production, hair-cutting, mask-making, etc.

Orientation seminars on how to organize cooperatives were also done for 30 potential groups with a total of 900 members. Various seminars on how to manage cooperatives were also given. CCLDO also provided their services to other agencies involved in livelihood development and skills training.

With marketing assistance from CCLDO, several producer-cooperatives managed to sell P206K worth of their products at the Bacolod Tourism Office Showroom, Rockwell Tent in Makati, BAYS Center, SM-Bacolod and at the Bacolod Booth- Panaad Park.

For this great contribution to helping the “small people” find ways to earn an honest living through micro-business enterprise, we thank the officials and staff of our CCLDO Office. We will be expecting a lot more from them as we give more focus to micro-business enterprises as part of our anti-poverty campaign.

TOURISM

Next, let us take a good look at tourism. **Tourist spending is an investment worth cultivating.** It keeps afloat our hotels and restaurants, transportation companies, souvenir shops, manufacturers of local delicacies, and other service providers.

Because inflow of money into our economy comes more quickly with tourist spending than with other traditional forms of inward investments, we have consistently promoted Bacolod City to visitors – local and foreign alike.

The next slide shows that our efforts are paying off. There is a steady increase of visitors into our city. In 2005, we received 234,025 visitors. In 2006, 253,262 came and in 2007, 303,314.

Between 2006 and 2007, we registered our biggest annual increase ever in visitor arrivals – 20% or 50,052 more. The profile of tourist arrivals for the same period shows that OFWs increased by 86% while foreigners grew by a whopping 122%.

We are now hitting 46,354 in foreign tourist arrivals with Koreans topping the list, followed by Americans, and then by the Japanese, Canadians, Germans, and Australians.

The Koreans reached an unprecedented 10,308 arrivals. The growing number of Korean students studying English has also spawned the establishment of 5 more language centers in the city, making it now a total of 12 English language schools.

During the past 12 months, various conventions and sports tournaments were held in Bacolod which brought to our city a steadily growing number of visitors. For example, the PAL Inter-Club Golf Tournament alone brought in some 2,000 visitors last February, 2008 while the convention of the Masons brought in some 4,000 people last April, 2008.

Prospects for the convention market are also bright. Thousands are still expected to come. Within this year, a number of organizations are set to convene here. Early next year, we look forward to the first-ever national gathering outside of Metro Manila of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines which could mean as many as 4,000 visitors.

Latest figures from the City Tourism Office pegged total room capacity of our hotels, pension houses, and other lodging places of varied categories at 2,234. When we started our term in mid-2004, this was only at 1,595 rooms. This means therefore that in the last 4 years, 639 more rooms were added to our capability to house visitors. This is a growth rate of 40% - - an investment by our local businessmen which is now reaping benefits for our city in terms of conventions and visitor arrivals. We can now even dare to claim that we have more hotel rooms and lodging spaces than any city in Western Visayas. For this development, we thank our local entrepreneurs for their confidence in the business and tourism potential of our city and province.

The Bacolaodiat Festival, now on its 3rd year of celebration, is becoming another tourist event that is attracting a good number of visitors into our city. For this development, we wish to thank the members of the Filipino-Chinese community for their support of this effort.

Our main tourism event, the MassKara Festival, continues to draw record crowds. It is our pride to share with you that our MassKara Festival won as First Runner-up in the Best Tourism Event in the Philippines during the 8th National Convention of Tourism Officers held in Camarines Sur last October, 2007.

As part of our tourism promotions, our MassKara dancers also performed last May, 2008 during the Pattaraday Unity Festival at Santiago City in Isabela, Cagayan Valley and during the Sangyaw Festival in Tacloban City last June, 2008.

Our MassKara dance performance during the Regional Parade of Festivals held last November 15, 2007 sponsored by the Department of Tourism also won as "Best in Choreography" and "Best in Performance".

Bacolod City co-hosted with the Province of Negros Occidental the Western Visayas Regional Travel Assembly last November 14, 2007 where we were personally given the "Regional Tourism Excellence Award-Western Visayas Lifetime Achievement Award".

For the success of our tourism promotions and initiatives, we would like to acknowledge and thank the officials and staff of the Bacolod City Tourism Office and Councilor Homer Bais, Chairman of the SP Committee on Tourism & Local, International Cooperation, for his all-out support of our tourism programs.

AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS

Let us now discuss how **agricultural activity** in our rural barangays helped sustain our economy.

Food production initiatives of our City Agriculture Office included the grant of subsidies to 52 farmers for palay seeds and foliar fertilizer and the distribution of 6,582 vegetable seed packs and 2,565 fruit tree seedlings to various beneficiaries.

Techno-demo projects were put up to teach poultry and swine production. In this connection, 144 heads of layers were introduced and 121 heads of swine were dispersed.

Bantay Dagat undertook 105 operations and apprehended 78 vessels engaged in illegal fishing.

14 artificial reefs were also installed in sea waters of Brgys. Singcang Airport, Sum-ag and Tangub.

The Bio-Intensively Nurtured Garden Project was also actively pursued to encourage urban poor constituents and families with malnourished children to grow assorted vegetables at home to improve family nutrition. To this end, 230 poor families in 7 barangays were given 1,270 polybags with assorted vegetable seedlings to grow at home. They were also taught how to propagate these seedlings and asked to teach their neighbors the method of home-growing vegetables in polybags.

For these efforts, we thank the officials and staff of our City Agriculture Office. However, we are also putting them on notice that we will be depending on them for more help in our anti-poverty and food sufficiency programs.

DELIVERY OF BASIC SERVICES

May I now report on basic services that have been delivered over the past year ending June 30, 2008. These cover the following areas:

1. Health services
2. Social services
3. Anti-poverty programs
4. Solid waste management
5. Flood Control
6. Resettlement and housing
7. Public education

8. Youth and sports
9. Disaster preparedness
10. Peace and order
11. Traffic
12. Streetlighting
13. Slaughterhouse
14. City Hall services and employees

HEALTH SERVICES

During the year ending June 30, 2008, P 71 million were spent to bring health services to our people.

In summary, our City Health Office was able to provide services to a total of 276,564 beneficiaries coming from:

- 16,324 mothers and mothers-to-be
- 94,446 children
- 10,349 dental cases
- 40,035 people needing various laboratory services
- 6,247 people needing disease control and surveillance
- 100,189 people who benefited from environmental health and sanitation programs
- 1,660 people needing mental health services
- 1,112 people needing pre-marital counseling services
- 2,942 women needing family planning services
- 3,260 people needing "Operation Tuli" services

The City Health Office also conducted blood-letting activities in different barangays and organizations and elicited 724 blood donors.

Philhealth cards were also given to 1,706 indigent beneficiaries.

In the fight against dengue, P1.9 million worth of larvacides was purchased and introduced into stagnant water pools and probable breeding grounds of mosquitoes, and a total of 11,255 houses, establishments and premises were fumigated as a joint effort between the City Health Office and the Dengue Task Force that was created in 2007. Neighborhoods where dengue cases were reported were immediately surveyed for epidemiological and entomological purposes. An information campaign in different schools and barangays was also conducted to help people combat the incidence of dengue cases.

So far, the number of dengue cases reported during the first 6 months of 2007 and the first 6 months of 2008 sharply declined by 51% from a total of 410 cases to 200. We again call on our people to be aware that dengue cases normally rise during the second half of each year during the rainy season. So we should start all over again to make sure that stagnant water in our homes and neighborhoods are either poured out or treated with larvacides to prevent the breeding of carrier mosquitoes.

For this more successful fight against dengue, we have to thank Councilor Nap Cordova, Chairman of the SP Committee on Health and Sanitation, for his help in the anti-dengue campaign.

With reference to hospital services, the city government has been paying the salaries of 24 nurses assigned to augment the staff of the Provincial Hospital. However, knowing that our people need more hospital services, we created last March 6, 2008 a Study Group headed by Vice-Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson, in partnership with the University of St. La Salle, to look at possible options on how we can provide hospital services to our people. Data is still being gathered for this study. We would like to thank USLS through its President, Bro. Ray Suplido, for this great service to the city.

Our City Health Office also conducted 34 medical and 8 dental missions in various barangays which benefited 15,110 people. In addition, the City Health Office partnered with several other civic clubs, companies and NGOs, for a total of 17 medical and dental missions which brought help to 17,425 beneficiaries.

Among these private sector partners of the City Health Office are Bantay Bata 163 and ABS-CBN Bacolod, Calvary Christian Trust School, Aksyon Radyo-Bacolod, Bombo Radyo-Bacolod, Couples in Touch Group-Baptist Church, Boehringer Ingelheim, Inc., Mt. Kanlandog Lion's Club, Federation of Senior Citizens Associations of Bacolod, Neg. Occ. Pharmaceutical Association, Gawad Kalinga Foundation, Philippine Waters Foundation, Inc., RMN-DYHB Radio, SM-Bacolod, Peace Community Action Group, Drugstores Association of the Philippines, Operation Care Ministry, Give Kare Health Foundation, Inc., Negros Daily Bulletin, BACGEM, Center for People's Resources & Services, Inc., Island Health Integrated Program, and MOR 101.5

To all these generous people, we extend our grateful thanks.

For the effective work of our City Health Office, Bacolod City was cited by the Department of Health-Region 6 Office during the 2007 Regional Health Summit as having accomplished 100% of the Expanded Program on Immunization.

We also complemented our health services with a Nutrition Program under the administration of the Urban Basic Services Division or UBSD. This Nutrition

Program provided supplementary feeding to 5,710 under-nourished schoolchildren through the Insumix and Nutripan Projects.

Our Nutrition Program also continued to get help from 2 generous institutions: Evangelistic International and Here's Hope Ministries, Inc.. In partnership with them, 4,613 more schoolchildren were given sustained feeding for 4 months. Another 3,000 are targeted to avail of this supplementary feeding from the city and from these 2 NGOs. Once more, may we thank Evangelistic International and Here's Hope Ministries, Inc. for their great kindness.

Bacolod City's Nutrition Program was given the Green Banner Award last October 5, 2007 during the 18th Nutrition Congress sponsored by the National Nutrition Council of the Department of Health. This award is to recognize exemplary performance in nutrition program implementation as prescribed by the National Nutrition Council. We are very happy about this award because the last time that Bacolod City won it was in 1980!

During the Philippine Health Promotion Awareness Awards held last November, 2007, Bacolod City was awarded as "Regional Winner, Highly Urbanized City Category" in health promotion awareness. During the same event, Kaisei Restaurant won as "Healthy Eating Place" and Bongbong's Pasalubong Center as "Healthy Work Place". These rewards resulted from the efforts of our City Health Office and private businesses in ensuring that our restaurants meet proper health and sanitation standards.

To the officials and staff of our City Health Office and UBSD, congratulations for a job well done and thank you for your hard work.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Let us now look at the contribution of our Department of Social Services and Development or DSSD to the quality of life of our people.

DSSD spent P40 million over the past 12 months to bring its services and programs to our people. This was P4 million or 11% more than the previous year. They were able to serve 28,055 cases during the year ending June 30, 2008.

Major beneficiaries of DSSD services included:

- 8,927 pre-schoolers enrolled in 116 day care centers
- 1,041 malnourished children below 3 years old who availed of supplementary feeding and Supervised Neighborhood Play

- 7,468 parents who attended the Parent Effectiveness Service to enhance their parenting skills
- 571 street children and children in conflict with the law who were placed at the Social Development Center for residential care, temporary shelter and custodial care (Of these, 292 have been re-integrated into their families)
- 178 out-of-school youth who were given Alay Lakad vocational scholarships
- 676 World War II veterans who received financial assistance
- 3,340 senior citizens who availed of various programs and assistance
- 1,352 other needy adults who availed of Nugabest bed massage therapy
- 130 blind people and their families
- 86 disabled persons who availed of financial assistance and various services
- 348 indigents who received medical, financial, burial and transportation assistance
- 3,736 Typhoon Frank victims who availed of food and medical aid
- 54 fire victims who availed of food and medical aid
- 24 families relocated from Purok Mahimulaton who availed of food and medical aid
- 264 streetchildren or children of mendicants who were given supplementary feeding, home visits, counseling and tutorial sessions
- 11 social welfare institutions which availed of financial assistance totaling P2.7 million.

In addition to these programs of our DSSD, we were also blessed with generous donations for Typhoon Frank victims. During my last trip to Las Vegas for the title match of Manny Pacquiao vs. David Diaz, I appealed to Manny for help to our typhoon victims. This was the first time ever that I asked him for any financial assistance. He said yes right away and on July 17-18, 2008, Manny Pacquiao came to Bacolod himself and personally distributed relief foodstuffs worth P1 million to 6,320 families.

While still in the U.S. for that same trip, we were also able to reach members of the Bacolod Society of America and the Negrenses of America who pooled together a total of US\$ 2,370.00 which our DSSD used to buy additional relief foodstuffs for distribution to 1,070 families.

To Champion Manny Pacquiao and the members of the Bacolod Society of America and the Negrenses of America, our heartfelt thanks. May your tribe increase and may you be blessed a thousandfold for your kindness to our people.

For other DSSD services, we are happy to report that the Women's Crisis Center was able to help 87 women, 10 children and 16 men who were victims of domestic violence.

Our DSSD staff is also working closely with barangay officials to help them organize and activate their Barangay Council for the Protection of Children or BCPC. As of now, only 24 BCPCs are functioning.

We also organized last December 12, 2007 the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking of Bacolod City with DSSD as lead agency.

In line with our continuing thrust to improve social services to children, we approved last year the inclusion in this year's budget of the amount of P1.5 million for the repair of the Social Development Center which provides residential care, temporary shelter and custodial care for street children, "rugby kids", and children in conflict with the law. Purchase of materials for the repair work is now on-going. More funds will be budgeted next year for the improvement of the facility. Once the City Cooperative and Livelihood Development Office moves out of the premises shared with the Social Development Center, the vacated space will be turned over for use of those children classified as "in conflict with the law".

In partnership with the City Health Office, the DSSD worked diligently on programs for children. As a result of this close collaboration, Bacolod City was again awarded for the 8th straight year as the "Most Child-friendly Highly Urbanized City for 2007 in Region 6" and will vie for the national search as representative of Region 6. During the national search in the previous year for the most child-friendly city in the Philippines, we were ranked no. 2, next only to Makati City, in ceremonies graced by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at Malacañang Palace.

For this feat and for their other accomplishments, may we acknowledge and thank the officials and staff of the DSSD and the City Health Office. Please keep up the good work.

To augment the services of the DSSD, our Sectoral Concerns Office, through linkages with various national government agencies and Philippine embassies abroad, also helped 10 families of OFWs with assistance ranging from repatriation of human remains to locating missing OFWs who went into hiding from abusive employers.

The Sectoral Concerns Office also oriented trisikad drivers and operators on their duty as transport workers and on social welfare protection through Philhealth and SSS coverages. It also helped Globe Telecom launch its livelihood program for trisikad drivers and operators.

It also coordinated with the Department of Labor and Employment on ways to implement programs to promote and protect informal sector workers under the Unlad Kabuhayan Laban sa Kahirapan Program of the DOLE. The Sectoral Concerns Office also assisted in helping sidewalk vendors, the disabled, and senior citizens.

Additional financial assistance totaling P1.3 million was also provided to 1,939 indigent beneficiaries for medical and burial expenses through the Public Affairs and Assistance Division.

For his help in attending to senior citizens' concerns, we wish to thank Councilor Catalino Alisbo, Chairman of the SP Committee on Senior Citizens and Veterans Affairs. May we also cite and thank the hard work of the officials and staff of the Sectoral Concerns Office and the Public Affairs and Assistance Division for their service to the marginalized sectors of our community.

ANTI-POVERTY PROGRAMS

Ever cognizant of the prevalence of poverty among the greater number of our people and the need to uplift them with government help, we organized the Bacolod City Anti-Poverty Council to help formulate policies and programs that can **help alleviate the plight of the poor** in our city.

The first activity of this council was to commission a survey and mapping activity of economically-depressed areas in our city to develop a broad and solid sex-disaggregated data base that will help us diagnose the extent of poverty in our city, to determine its causes, to formulate appropriate policies and programs, to identify eligible beneficiaries, and to assess the eventual impact of such policies and programs.

For this extensive survey and mapping activity, we are being assisted by Councilor Celia Flor, Co-Chairman and Action Officer of the Bacolod Anti-poverty Council, to organize, guide and monitor the survey team through its pre-survey training and actual field work so that appropriate anti-poverty programs can be planned out and implemented as soon as possible based on the results of the study. The survey enumerators have already undergone training and the actual field work will start soon. For her unstinting help in this endeavor, may we thank Councilor Flor.

In this regard, may we ask for the help of all city government officials and employees, all barangay and purok officials, and all Bacolodnons for that matter, to make this survey a success so that useful data for proper planning can be secured as soon as possible.

In line also with providing better services to the urban poor, we launched last April, 2008 “Task Force Bantay-Bugas” to keep a special price watch on rice supply, rice sales and rice prices among dealers, suppliers, distributors and retailers of this basic commodity. This task force also assisted in delivering NFA rice stocks to authorized outlets in the barangays and puroks of the city to make cheaper rice more readily available especially to the poor and to help the NFA make sure that their rice are not rebagged and sold at commercial prices. This project will continue as long as there is a need for it.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

We come now to another priority area of service – that of **solid waste management**.

Our activities in this area focused on 3 main thrusts: improve garbage collection, improve garbage disposal and purchase a dumpsite where we can eventually establish a sanitary landfill in compliance with R.A. 9003.

On measures to improve garbage collection, our Department of Public Services or DPS reviewed its garbage collection routes and schedules and implemented the block system of garbage collection. On the average everyday, we handle more than 150 tons of garbage. We are now fielding 33 garbage trucks to 51 collection zones in the city plus a striker unit to attend to phoned-in complaints from areas where collection may have bogged down because assigned garbage trucks needed emergency repairs.

The downtown area and the three public markets are serviced daily by 3 shifts. Residential areas are serviced once or twice a week. Garbage collection by DPS is also augmented by some barangays which have their own dump trucks and are the ones doing door-to-door collection in some of their areas.

The DPS also monitored and closed 30 mini-dumpsites that have developed in various points in the city, some even on median islands of city streets. Keeping people in neighborhoods informed of garbage pick-up schedule in their block have greatly helped towards the eradication of these unsightly and unsanitary mini-dumpsites.

Public address systems have been installed in our dump trucks so that neighborhoods can be alerted early enough of their arrival and give the residents enough time to put out their garbage along the street for pick-up.

We also instituted a similar measure in the 3 major public markets where garbage is brought out only upon the arrival of garbage trucks to lessen the incidence of garbage scattered in the outside premises of these markets.

The DPS has 4 old garbage container vans, 3 of which are currently under repair. Considering the need for this equipment to combat the proliferation of mini-dumpsites in populous areas, 5 additional garbage container vans worth P1 million were bought and placed at strategic points in the city.

Big stores, malls, hospitals and schools were also encouraged to have their own garbage container vans which the DPS periodically hauls away and empties out. Presently, there are 17 of these private container vans which are a big help to our garbage collection efforts.

We are now in the process of procuring protective gloves and masks for our garbage collectors. Those on the night shift will also be issued reflectorized vests so that they can be easily seen as they work on roadsides at night.

Two groups of Monitoring and Enforcement Teams were also formed to check on uncollected garbage and apprehend illegal dumping of garbage. From July to December, 2007, our Enforcement Team had filed about 70 cases of illegal dumping. From January to June this year, we are down to 38 cases. We believe our enforcement activities are starting to bear good fruit. These cases do not include minors and violators above 70 years of age who were just warned and educated regarding proper waste disposal.

Considering that community cleanliness is the responsibility of every citizen and not of the DPS alone, we had to involve the entire community in this effort by undertaking an information campaign through TV, print and radio advertisements.

We also requested the help of the Department of Education for an information drive in public and private schools on how schoolchildren can help in our "clean and green" activities not only in their schools but also at home and in their neighborhoods.

A seminar on R.A. 9003 otherwise known as the "Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000" was also conducted by the DPS in various barangays. We also launched in May, 2008 the "Clean and Green Contest in Barangays" to run until September this year. In line with this, we are working more closely with SK organizations in various barangays for a voluntary clean-up drive every Sunday. We have observed that in barangays which actively participate in the Clean & Green Project, there is always a noticeable improvement in the cleanliness of its surroundings.

As of June 30, 2008, 60 of the 61 barangays have received their solid waste management funds aggregating P3 million. The lone remaining barangay will also get its proper share once it submits the required prerequisite documents.

To improve waste disposal, we started to implement waste segregation in malls, Libertad market, and commercial establishments within the downtown area. Every afternoon, biodegradables are picked up first and brought to the DPS Compound in Alijis for shredding and composting. In previous years, we used vermi-culture to help in composting activities to produce organic fertilizers which we use in our Clean and Green Programs. However, considering the volume of biodegradable waste, we found it necessary to speed up the process by using rotary composters, 4 units of which were recently bought. On the other hand, non-biodegradables are brought directly to the Felisa dumpsite.

To reduce the incidence of dump truck breakdowns due to bad roads and to ensure that the road leading to the Felisa dumpsite remains passable even in bad weather, this road was also repaired for P1 million.

Another big project we undertook for solid waste management was the purchase of a 7-hectare property of the Lopez Family at Barangay Felisa for a total price of P23.8 million, of which P20 million has already been paid. This is adjacent to the area presently used as a controlled dumpsite of the city. Again, this is another project dreamed of in previous administrations which became a reality only now.

This newly-bought property will eventually be developed into a waste disposal facility such as a sanitary landfill to comply with the provisions of R.A. 9003. The DENR has imposed deadlines on the closure of open dumpsites like the one we have. We were therefore hard-pressed for time to purchase a property for the required replacement waste disposal facility. Choosing the site for such a facility is not easy to do as the DENR has strict guidelines and prerequisite activities which may take months to comply with, especially if it involved moving the site to another barangay.

The Clean and Green Coordinating Action Team recommended the Lopez property at Barangay Felisa because it complies with many basic requirements for a dumpsite. Another major consideration is that the property can be considered as covered by the DENR "Notice to Proceed" which, in effect, guarantees continuity of our dumpsite operations.

In all these undertakings on solid waste management, we would like to acknowledge with grateful thanks the consistent help of Councilor Greg Gasataya, Chairman of the SP Committee on Environment & Ecology and Chairman of the Bacolod City Clean and Green Coordinating Action Team.

Our thanks also go to Councilor Diosdado Valenzuela, Chairman of the SP Committee on Barangay Affairs, and to the other barangay and purok officials who implemented the "Clean and Green Program" in their respective areas.

Apparently, our efforts have been successful. The Department of Tourism and the Department of Interior and Local Government jointly awarded Bacolod City last December 20, 2007 as "First Place, Highly Urbanized City Category" in the 2007 Gawad Pangulo sa Kapitaligiran, Western Visayas Regional Clean and Green Award.

To the officials, staff and employees of our DPS, we would like to commend them too for their hard work, especially the garbage collectors and the street cleaners. They very rarely get acknowledged for their efforts and in this connection, we would like to thank the Rotary Club of Bacolod-West for awarding the 10 Outstanding Metro Aides of Bacolod City last December 11, 2007.

The DPS also awarded the outstanding garbage collectors and street cleaners for 2007 in a special program last December 22, 2007.

All these efforts have resulted to a discernible reduction in garbage volume. We plan to do even better in the succeeding months. But we cannot make it without the cooperation of all citizens because there is not enough money to pay people to do the job. We just have to depend on each citizen doing his share in cleaning up his surroundings.

FLOOD CONTROL

After solid waste management, we would like to address now the related issue of flood control.

To plan and implement flood control activities, we organized the Bacolod City Flood Control Coordinating Action Team headed by Councilor Bobby Rojas as an inter-agency effort.

Main activities during the year ending June 30, 2008 involved the dredging of the Banago Creek and the Mandalagan River, and the improvement and declogging of drainage in various parts of the city.

A total of P10 million was spent for the dredging of Banago Creek and Mandalagan River.

The dredging of Banago Creek started in August, 2007 and was completed on March 19, 2008. 600 meters of the shallowest portions were dredged. Before dredging, this creek was only 12 meters wide and 1.5 meters deep. After dredging, it was widened to 40 meters, especially at its mouth, and deepened to 2 meters based on water sounding taken during mean low water.

The dredging of the Banago Creek took time to finish because we had to contend first with illegal structures along its banks which impeded the work. Since DPWH, and not the city, has jurisdiction over waterways, the removal of these illegal structures was supposedly also their responsibility. However, since their legal people could not attend to this local problem effectively and quickly enough, the city found itself forced to assume the responsibility of DPWH in removing these illegal structures.

Since we cannot forcibly demolish these structures as we had to also observe due process and consider the human rights of the squatters to be affected, we initially mulled the filing of appropriate charges in court, like what the DPWH could have done. However, it was eventually the consensus that such legal action may take too long to be resolved while the need to dredge the Banago Creek was urgent. After careful study, it was decided that the best possible legal option was to go through the legislative route by requesting our Sangguniang Panlungsod to pass a resolution to declare these structures along waterways as “nuisance” and therefore hasten the legal process needed to remove such structures. This resolution was unanimously passed by the Sangguniang Panlungsod for which support I would like to thank them.

You know, politicians, in their work of public service, would very rarely take the courage to do this for obvious reasons. Many would prefer to leave this to the courts, never mind if it will take a long time to be resolved. But no, your public officials took this difficult way and I think, they deserve a round of applause for it.

The 86 families at the mouth of the Banago Creek who were removed from there were given financial assistance of P3K per family. However, only 14 chose to be relocated to the Vista Alegre-Granada Relocation Site. The rest relocated themselves to neighboring areas to be close to their source of livelihood.

To protect the newly-dredged Banago Creek from filling up again quickly from erosion of its riverbank, a river protection wall is now undergoing construction there at a cost of P1.5 million. Another shoreline protection wall with a project cost of P350K is being constructed near the mouth of the Banago Creek to protect the foreshore area there from further erosion.

In the inner portion of the Banago Creek, the DPWH also started last December, 2007 their own Floodway Project, said to cost P16 million. This floodway is supposed to be for 800 meters but the project has to traverse a property owned by the Philippine National Bank and while we have helped DPWH negotiate with the PNB to allow the floodway to pass through the property, DPWH has to take a more active role in pursuing either the expropriation of the portion that the floodway will use up or the purchase of the properties from PNB inasmuch as the bank is unwilling to cede it for free.

Since the floodway project is under the jurisdiction of the DPWH, the city can only assist in whatever way it can to speed up its completion. In fact, we have set aside P1.5 million of city funds to contribute to this national project, if need be. We have also given financial assistance of P3K per family to the 38 families who will have to vacate from the area. Presently, we understand that DPWH has finished about 60 % of the first 300 meters of the floodway that was funded by the initial release of P6 million from the DPWH.

With regard to the Mandalagan River, dredging started on March 24, 2008 and wound up last July 22, 2008, beyond the cut-off of this report. This work involved dredging a length of 700 meters and widening the river from 100 to 120 meters. Based on water sounding taken during mean low water, the dredging also deepened the river from a shallow 1/4 meter to 2 meters.

At this point, may we thank the City Government of Sipalay through Mayor Soledad Montilla for renting out their dredger to us.

During the year, the Public Safety and Emergency Management Section of the Mayor's Office also conducted hazard mapping activities to pinpoint flood-prone areas in the city.

In addition to these projects, the Flood Control Coordinating Action Team was provided a budget of P2.5 million for cleaning of creeks and waterways and declogging of drainage in various parts of the city. A clean-up team of 21 people was organized in December, 2007.

Since then until June 30, 2008, they have undertaken 15 jobs to clean various creeks and waterways aggregating a combined length of 11,560 linear meters and 26 jobs to declog canals and drainages with a combined length of 12,915 linear meters in various parts of the city.

It would take too long to enumerate the details of these clean-up jobs, so please just refer to the screen as the information is flashed or you can refer later to copies of this report that will be distributed afterwards, for the details.

CLEANING OF CREEKS AND WATERWAYS	
1. Bata-Banago Creek (Roselawn – Bata up to Prk. Riverside, Banago)	3,500 linear meters more or less
2. Catmon Creek (Country Mart, Bangga Subay, Back of Lopue's)	700 linear meters
3. Prk. Carvic, Tuburan, Progreso, Paraiso, & Rolling Hills Bridge / Brgy. Mandalagan	1,100 linear meters
4. Mambuloc Creek (Lopez Jaena Bridge., Brgy. 17, 18, 9, 11, 10, & 8)	1,600 linear meters
5. Maupay Creek (Brgy. 37, 15 & 14)	600 linear meters
6. Prk. Malinong – Tangub	100 linear meters
7. Pag-asa Creek – Tangub	1,200 linear meters

CLEANING OF CREEKS AND WATERWAYS (continued)	
8. Cabalagnan Creek (Cabalagnan Bridge going to back of LCC/Brgy. Pahanocoy)	800 linear meters
9. Pahanocoy Creek (from Bridge going to East/Brgy. Pahanocoy)	300 linear meters
10. Taculing Creek (Prk. Santan, Rosal, B.M. & Progreso / Brgy. Taculing)	900 linear meters
11. La Salle Creek (USLS & L' Ecole School)	200 linear meters
12. Lupit River (Gaisano City Bridge)	75 meters long x 20 meters width
13. Magsungay River (J.R. Torres Avenue)	35 meters long x 6 meters width
14. Pepsi Bridge, CY NN Bridge, Prk. Riverside, Prk. Paraiso	250 meters long x 30 meters width
15. Carmelite Creek (Re-Ditching and Clearing)	200 meter long x 25 meters width

DRAINAGE DECLOGGING	
1. Brgy. 1 (Prk. Tuna, Bangrus & Bolinao)	840 linear meters
2. Brgy. 2 (Prk. Sigay & Kagaykay)	235 linear meters
3. Brgy. 3 (Prk. Lubi, Tilapia, Ceresa I, Kamunsil, Nangka, Ceresa II)	1,080 linear meters
4. Brgy. 4 (Prk. Saylan, Uraro, Kamote Kahoy)	1,200 linear meters
5. Brgy. 7 (12, 13, & 14 th Sts.)	100 linear meters
6. BCNHS – Libertad	300 linear meters
7. Brgy. Taculing (Cory, B.M., Rosal)	510 linear meters
8. Brgy. Singcang (Prk. Kaingin) - ongoing	300 linear meters
9. Brgy. Villamonte (Malaspina-Lopez Jaena)	100 linear meters
10. Rosario-San Juan	250 linear meters
11. Eoreco Subd. fronting the residence of Mrs. Maggie Jalandoni	200 linear meters
12. Rosario-San Juan to San Juan- Luzuriaga	500 linear meters
13. Prk. Kaingin, Singcang	300 linear meters
14. Lopez-Jaena-Burgos to Lopez Jaena-Narra St.	700 linear meters
15. Malaspina-Lopez Jaena St. to Malaspina-Hilado St.	600 linear meters
16. 12 th Lacson St. to 14 th Lacson St.	400 linear meters
17. San Juan-North Capitol Road/Pala-Pala	300 linear meters
18 San Juan-Luzuriaga St. to San Juan-Gonzaga St., Gonzaga-San Juan to Gatuslao St., Gonzaga-Gatuslao to Gatuslao-Rizal St.	1,300 linear meters
19. San Juan-Rosario to Gonzaga St.	800 linear meters
20. Luzuriaga-San Juan to Lacson St.	300 linear meters
21. Gatuslao-Rizal to San Sebastian St.	500 linear meters
22. Ballesteros St.	400 linear meters
23. Gonzaga-San Juan to Locsin St.	600 linear meters
24. Cuadra-Gatuslao to Locsin St.	300 linear meters
25. Hilado-Burgos to Hua Ming	500 linear meters
26. Brgy. 20, Prk Avocado and Prk. Tisa	300 linear meters

In addition to the above-mentioned projects, the City Engineer's Office also completed 25 other jobs related to flood control with project costs totaling P4.9 million. Details are also going to be flashed on the screen and can be read on copies of this report that will be distributed later.

CEO- COMPLETED PROJECTS FOR FLOOD CONTROL	
Additional construction of spur dike at Purok Kagaykay-Brgy 2	P 200,000
Box culvert at Purok Cereza-North	90,000
Drainage improvement at Purok Coca-cola	100,000
Drainage improvement at Purok Magnolia	145,000
Clearing/cleaning of drainage canal at Purok Paglaum	60,000
Improvement of drainage /laying of RC pipe at Brgy Hall, Purok Paglaum	50,000
Rehab of drainage at Brgy 18	100,000
Rehab of main drainage at Brgy 23	80,000
Reditching of canal at Brgy 23	20,000
Repair/rehab & cleaning of drainage at 4 puroks, Brgy 26	180,000
Construction of River Wall Protection & installation of culverts/pipes at various puroks, Brgy 28	270,000
Repair of drainage & sewerage system at Brgy 29	100,000
Drainage improvement @ Bagong Buhay Road & widening of Cameroli Ave.	100,000
Improvement of canal at Alunan Ave.	100,000
Redredging of open canal at Brgy 35	40,000
Widening of drainage system at Purok Adelfa, Brgy 38	100,000
Drainage improvement at Osmeña Ave., Brgy 39	515,000
Drainage improvement at Roxas Ave., Brgy 39	485,000
Drainage repair at Zone 9, Brgy Handumanan	100,000
Drainage improvement at Kaakbay Homeowners Assn., Purok Tonggoy, Brgy Mandalagan	280,000
Construction of wing wall and riprap approaches of Magsungay and Brgy 35	550,000
Imprvt. & const. of drainages/open canals with riprap, JR Torres Road from Magsungay Bridge to Calong-calong	345,000
Drainage imprvt. at San Sebastian Rd., Brgy Sum-ag	300,000
Drainage imprvt. at Greensfield, Brgy Tangub	50,000
Drainage imprvt & const. of footwalk at Purok San Roque, Brgy Tangub	570,000
TOTAL	P4,930,000

An additional P1.9 million have been committed for 12 **on-going** flood control projects of the City Engineer's Office, as follows:

CEO ON-GOING PROJECTS FOR FLOOD CONTROL	
Const. of drainage system & footwalk @ Brgy 1	P 275,000
Riprap at Purok Bolinao, Brgy 1	100,000
Improvement of drainage @ Purok Tuna & Bonito, Brgy 1	100,000
Drainage imprvt. & repair of gutter & covered court, Brgy 4	100,000
Continue laying of culvert to open canal & widening thereafter @ 21 st St., PO Torre Sts. & back of Redemptorist	100,000
Repair/rehab/clearing & cleaning of drainage & canals at Puroks Paglaum & Pag-asa, Brgy 17	75,000
Declogging of Mambuloc Creek, Brgy 21	100,000
Footwalk with box culvert @ Purok Acacia 1, Brgy 27	345,000
Riverbank protection wall @ Purok Balonggay, Brgy 28	270,000
Repair/rehab of drainage system, Brgy 36	145,000
Rehab of drainage system along Mabini and San Sebastian Sts., Brgy 30	225,000
Drainage cleaning/declogging at Puroks St. Joseph, San Sebastian & Sto. Niño, Brgy 37	50,000
TOTAL	P 1,885,000

In addition, 2 new projects totaling P6.4 million are forthcoming.

One is for the construction of a diversion channel from Purok Riverside to Banago Creek for a project cost of P2 million. This project will also benefit directly the Sta. Clara Subdivision area. The other, with a project cost of P4.4 million, is to cover the demolition of cracked pavement and replacing it with a new concrete pavement with drainage declogging in Capitol Shopping, particularly along sections of Hilado St. from Malaspina to Yakal Ave., sections of Tindalo Ave. from Hilado to Lopez Jaena St., and sections of Narra Ave. from Hilado to Lopez Jaena St. We expect this project to diminish the constant flooding of the area near St. John's Institute even with mild rains.

In summary therefore, a total of P27.9 million have been spent or allocated for flood control activities and infrastructures during the year ending June 30, 2008. This covered the following:

Dredging of Banago Creek and Mandalagan River	P 10 million
Construction of river wall protection at Banago Creek	1.5 million
Construction of foreshore protection at Banago Creek	.350 million
Budget for clean-up of waterways & drainages by Action Team of Councilor Bobby Rojas	2.5 million
Financial assistance to families affected by clearing of waterways	.372 million

Flood control projects of the CEO:	
Completed	4.9 million
Ongoing	1.9 million
Forthcoming	<u>6.4 million</u>
TOTAL	P 27.9 million

Last June 2, 2008, we held a workshop with the Hon. Under-Secretary Antonio Golez of the Office of Civil Defense together with representatives of the Anti-BAHA Alliance with the hope that he can help us secure some funding from the national government for our flood control activities. A total requirement of P375 million was presented to him. It was also during this workshop that the Flood Mitigation Committee was created under the Bacolod City Disaster Coordinating Council. Membership of this Flood Mitigation Committee came from those who attended the workshop with USEC Golez.

After report cut-off of June 30, 2008 however, the prospects for getting national funding for our flood control program seemed to have become problematic. With the devastation that Typhoon Frank recently wrought on Western Visayas, particularly in Panay, disaster and rehabilitation funds from the national government, are now being poured into Panay. Bacolod City, if we should get any portion of this funding at all, cannot aspire to get the amount originally envisioned.

However, in consultation with the Hon. USEC Golez, we recently submitted a proposal requesting if Bacolod City can initially share even just P30 million from the "Typhoon Frank" Disaster Rehab Fund for Western Visayas to repair our own drainage systems damaged by Typhoon Frank. Specifically, we proposed that this P30 million go to the following projects:

Rehab/restoration of damaged drainage system at Malaspina-Lopez Jaena-Burgos Roads	P 4.685 million
Rehab/restoration/clearing of damaged drainage lines along Libertad-Lopez Jaena Sts.	3.685 million
Rehab of damaged drainage lines and system at Brgys 3 and 4 and Aguinaldo St. going to BS Aquino Drive	3.930 million
Reconstruction/decongestion of damaged drainage channel from Mambuloc Creek cutting across the reclamation area	15.000 million
Reconstruction/repair of damaged drainage lines along Ramylu Drive from Punta Bato to Prk. Pag-asa, Brgy. Tangub	<u>2.700 million</u>
Total	P 30.000 million

After several follow-ups, we were verbally informed a few days ago by Regional Director Rosario Cabrera of the Office of Civil Defense that our P30-million request has been included as part of the items to be funded by the Rehab Program of P12 billion under the Bangon Panay Task Force for Typhoon Frank damage. Please add your prayers to mine that this P30 million will be remitted to us soon.

So far, these have been our initiatives for flood control during the past year ending June 30, 2008. Contrary to what some sectors are saying, we have not trivialized our concern for flood control. Substantial local funds have been invested in this endeavor. However, we cannot accomplish everything overnight. May we appeal for greater patience.

To those who have given their overwhelming support for our flood control activities this year, especially Councilor Bobby Rojas and his team, the officials and staff of the City Engineer's Office and barangay officials who cooperated in many ways, our grateful thanks and appreciation for their hard work. There is still much more to be done but for now, let us celebrate what has been accomplished.

RESETTLEMENT AND HOUSING

May I report to you now on resettlement and housing since this is also partly related to flood control efforts.

On The Vista Alegre-Granada Relocation Site

So far, P37.3 million have already been spent since the start to develop the Vista Alegre-Granada Relocation Site. Of this, P25 million went to the clearing and building of a new road with a bridge and a box culvert branching out from the Granada Road to the entrance of the relocation site. P2.1 million went to land development, P3.4 million to electrification, P1.2 million to 50 artesian wells, P5.1 million to drainage facilities, and P500K for a box culvert to connect Block 53 to Block 58 and adjoining blocks and other facilities and utilities.

Specifically, over the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008, we have introduced improvements worth P5.6 million into the Vista Alegre-Granada Relocation Site for the construction of 20 additional artesian wells for P419K (this brings to 50 units of artesian wells so far constructed in the site, several of which are for repair or replacement), completion and construction of various drainage systems totaling P3.7 million, back-filling of some depressed areas for P1 million which generated 78 new homelots, and a box culvert for P500K.

An additional P2 million was also appropriated to energize the Gawad Kalinga Site, Kalantas and adjoining areas. Per program, these areas are expected to be energized before the end of this year.

A complete elementary school is already operating in the site. Part of the construction cost was funded by the city but the bigger share was from a generous donation of the Federation of Filipino-Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry which donation we again acknowledge with thanks and deepest appreciation. This is a fine example of government and private sector teamwork which gets things done more quickly for the benefit of the community.

We have also set aside an area for Gawad Kalinga, the officers of which have committed to build 120 homes there. Of this number, 47 have already been built and 31 of those have been occupied by eligible beneficiaries. The remaining 16 will soon be awarded to beneficiaries who have complied with the initial sweat equity requirements. May we thank the Gawad Kalinga volunteers once again for their apostolate among our poor and homeless.

Over the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008, the Bacolod Housing Authority or BHA processed 332 applications from various barangays to be accommodated in the area. BHA is expecting another batch of 289 applicants coming from those identified to be removed from waterways. After this batch, additional applicants can be accommodated only in case those with approved applications back out or lose their slots due to violation of award rules.

Of the applications processed, 249 lots were awarded during the year ending June 30, 2008. This brings to a total of 1,158 lots awarded since 2005 when we initiated the phase-by-phase development of the site.

On Fortune Towne

The Fortune Towne Relocation Site is already a settled community with some 659 lots awarded.

During the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008, we undertook 2 projects to improve drainage at various alleys and road lots for a total of P1.1 million. We also back-filled some depressed areas at a cost of P600K.

On Handumanan

The Handumanan Relocation Site is also another settled community with some 4,883 homes.

During the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008, we spent P448K there to improve the drainage in Road Lot 6, Phase 3.

Proposed On-Site Development at Brgy. 1 and Villa Esperanza-Brgy. Tangub

On the proposed on-site development at Barangay 1 and Villa Esperanza-Barangay Tangub, lot boundary survey and monumenting are ongoing in these 2 sites.

For Barangay 1, residents opted for Miscellaneous Sales Application facilitated by the City Task Force Public Land Acquisition and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources or DENR. There are 510 families involved in this undertaking. Land area for on-site development consists of 3 hectares more or less.

On the other hand, for Villa Esperanza, there are 243 occupants who will be beneficiaries of this on-site project. This involves 7.8 hectares, 4.6 hectares of which are earmarked for the beneficiaries and 1 hectare for the school site. The City will be applying for a Presidential Proclamation for the remaining 2.2 hectares to generate more lots and for an eco-park on the site.

Purok Riverside, Barangay Banago

Purok Riverside in Barangay Banago has an approximate area of 4.98 hectares. The lot was donated by Mr. Manuel Lacson to Bacolod City. Presently, there are 471 occupants on this site.

Adjacent to this site is another 1 hectare donated also by Mr. Lacson to Bacolod City. We have an agreement with Gawad Kalinga for them to also build 126 homes on this 1-hectare lot. Presently, 12 houses have been finished and 30 are undergoing construction.

A Note on Relocation

At this point, may we clarify that when a piece of private or public property needs to be cleared of squatters either because of judicial or legislative actions, these people must move out but they are free to move elsewhere, not necessarily to a government-owned relocation site. Government cannot force relocation on people. It is a voluntary thing. That is why people who want to avail of it should apply first for a slot in an official relocation site because these are getting fewer and more limited.

It may be of interest to note that Bacolod City is probably one of the very few highly-urbanized cities in the whole country that own large relocation sites. Presently, we have about 148 hectares all-in. Other cities merely give financial assistance to squatters who are subject of ejection and do not provide a relocation site. Others who are given a relocation site do not get financial assistance anymore. In Bacolod, we give both.

However, we foresee a time when land for relocation cannot be had anymore either because it has become too expensive or simply just no longer available. In the meantime however, we try to provide a relocation site for those who are subject of ejection cases. Presently, there are more than a thousand of these people who are covered by court cases for ejection. We all know that when landowners file cases for ejection, it will only be a matter of time before the affected squatters would have to move out. In addition, there is also quite a number of people who need to vacate from several waterways. Further aggravating the situation is the increasing emigration into Bacolod City by out-of-town people seeking better livelihood opportunities.

Considering these mounting social problems, we are now seriously studying to expand our landbanking efforts to provide another resettlement site for this growing number of informal settlers.

In the meantime, may we acknowledge and thank the officials and staff of the Bacolod Housing Authority for their achievements over the past year and the invaluable assistance of Councilor Dindo Ramos, Chairman of the SP Committee on Urban Poor, Housing & Resettlement, who has done a lot in advancing the cause of providing homes for the poor.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Let us now move on to public education.

We are happy to report that we have continued to subsidize miscellaneous fees in all our public elementary and high schools since Schoolyear 2005-06. We spent P2 million for this in SY 2005-2006, P2.7 million in SY 2006-2007, and P6.2 million in SY 2007-2008. We are still awaiting the billing of the DepEd for SY 2008-2009.

Likewise, we have expanded our City Scholarship Program. We are now sending 543 scholars to various colleges and universities in our city. We only had 374 scholars last year and 199 the year before that.

The Bacolod City Government through the Local School Board provided funds for an additional classroom and 2 school buildings at a total cost of P3.2 million. The DepEd Social Hall was also repaired. Furthermore, we provided 20

computers for various elementary schools and another 20 computers for various high schools.

Instructional materials worth P4.8 million were also distributed as additional subsidy for Grades 2 to 6 students.

During the past 12 months, we paid P16.6 million of the back ECOLA of public school teachers. As of June 30, 2008, unpaid back ECOLA stands at only P13.4 million out of the original amount of P69.5 million. Indeed, we have come a long way in settling this big obligation that seemed like a "Mission Impossible" when we assumed office in 2004. Our hard-working teachers truly deserve this priority attention.

Our public schools excelled in sports during the period under review. During the Provincial Meet Competition in December, 2007, the Division of Bacolod City emerged as the Over-all Provincial Champion with both the elementary and high school levels reaping championship trophies in their respective categories.

In the ensuing Regional Meet Competition in March, 2008, we brought home gold medals for table tennis, softball, discus throw, shot put, high jump, sipa, badminton, football, gymnastics, archery and taekwando.

In the National Palaro Games last April, 2008, the elementary softball team of ETCS 1 won the gold while the High School softball team of Domingo Lacson National High School earned the silver.

In addition to sports awards, our Bacolod public schools also distinguished themselves in other areas. The Bacolod City National High School won the championship in the West Negros University Quiz High in September, 2007 and also took 2nd place in the Mathematics Competition given by the Teachers Association of the Philippines Regional Team last February, 2008. In the Regional Schools Press Conference held last December 2007 in Iloilo City, representatives from our elementary schools won the Championship trophy in various aspects of journalistic writing while those from our high schools won the 1st runner-up slot in the same event.

Let us now take a look at the Bacolod City College.

We are happy to report that for the first semester of Schoolyear 2008-2009, we have 2,310 students enrolled in its various courses. This is an increase of 362 students or 19% over that of the last schoolyear. These figures show how far the Bacolod City College has grown since it was founded in 1997, during my first term as City Mayor, with an initial enrollment of only 91 students!

Enrollment profile of the Bacolod City College over the last 5 schoolyears and the first semester of the present schoolyear are shown on the screen. You will note that, except for SY 2005-06 when there was a slight reduction of 90 enrollees against the previous year, our enrollment has been steadily growing from year to year.

By the way, tuition fees at the Bacolod City College started at P30 per unit in 1997. Today, eleven years after, it is still at P30 per unit -- cheaper than a liter of gasoline and certainly, much more cheaper than the tuition of private colleges and universities which can run from a minimum of P430 per unit to P700 per unit.

Despite the cheap tuition, the curriculum has been beefed up with the introduction of short-term technical courses accredited with TESDA and the implementation of the ladderized system in Bachelor of Science in Information Systems and Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology.

The ladderized system works this way – for example, a student wants to enroll in Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology which is a 4-year course. He would have 3 routes to reach it. During the first 2 years, he should take the prescribed basic subjects and vocational courses of his choice.

For route no. 1, he can opt to train as a Civil Technician in painting or masonry or carpentry. After 2 years of basic subjects complemented with the prescribed vocational training, he can take a test given by the TESDA to earn a Certificate as Civil Technician specializing in painting or masonry or carpentry. This certificate will already help him find a job locally or abroad in these fields. If after earning this certificate, he decides to continue and gain the full Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Technology, then he invests in 2 more years of academic courses. In the meantime he can already find a job. The additional 2 years of study for the Bachelor of Science degree can be finished right away or at a later time.

Route no. 2 would be to train initially for a TESDA Certificate as Mechanical Technician specializing in plumbing or automotive or refrigeration/airconditioning courses. Route no. 3 would be to train for a TESDA Certificate as Electronics or Electrical Technician specializing in electronics or industrial electricity or building electricity. Then an additional 2 years of study is needed to earn the Bachelor of Science Degree in Industrial Technology.

The benefits of the ladderized system are obvious, especially to those who cannot afford an expensive 4-year college course. If people find themselves unable to complete the 4-year degree course, then at least, their first 2 years in college need not go to waste because they can now qualify as skilled workers when they go job-hunting here or abroad. And all these for only P30 per unit!

On physical amenities, we previously maintained 2 campuses: one in Sum-ag and another in Taculing. However, with increased enrollment for this semester, the University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos very kindly allowed us to use their St. Ezekiel Moreno Training Center in Handumanan as an extension campus. Now, we also hold evening classes at the Bacolod City National High School.

We have already finished the covered footwalk from the entrance of the Sum-ag campus to its main building.

We are happy to report that in the 2007 licensure examinations, our passing average for Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education was 63% against the national passing average of 27.5%. For Bachelor of Science in Education, our passing average was 58% against the national passing average of 29%. Not bad for a tuition fee of only P30 per unit, don't you think?

For all these achievements, we would like to thank the administration of the City College headed by Dr. Rogelio Balô, who is also our City Administrator, for their work in upgrading the school facilities on a shoestring budget and for enhancing the curriculum of the school to make it more responsive to the needs of the students and the job market. Truly, getting an education at the Bacolod City College is a good investment for the future.

YOUTH AND SPORTS

With regard to youth and sports, we organized various activities for this sector.

We sponsored several grade school and high school students from the city to participate in the Panaad sa Negros Sports Festival 2008. These Bacolod students reaped for us 3 golds, 3 silvers, and 3 bronzes in taekwando, 2nd and 3rd place wins in volleyball, and championship slots in various categories of chess.

To assist various barangays and sports associations, we issued to them sports supplies for basketball, volleyball and chess.

Financial assistance aggregating P995K was also given to various sports groups and barangays. Of this amount, P775K went to the Little League softball teams to help defray part of their expenses to participate in the World Series last year in the U.S. and for their participation this year in the Philippine Series. As you will note, of the total financial assistance extended to various sports groups, these Little League softball teams got 78% of it – the biggest chunk in fact.

May we clarify that these Little League softball teams are not official teams of the schools whose names they carry nor are they official teams of the City of Bacolod. They are private sports groups which recruit softball teams from public schools such as ETCS 1 and 2, Domingo Lacson National High School, Paglaum Elementary School, and Bacolod City National High School, and when they participate in local, national and international softball events, they do so as a private entity. Bacolod City is supposedly only one of the many sponsors that they can tap for funding assistance. In fact, the province of Negros Occidental is also contributing to their travel expenses. Thus, the recent media attacks denigrating Bacolod City officials for not footing travel expenses of these softball teams to China for the 2008 Asia-Pacific Series is, at the very least, a misunderstanding of the status of these teams.

While we are proud of the trophies brought home from time to time by these Little Leaguers, we cannot subsidize all their national and international trips **every year**, otherwise, we will have nothing left for sports development programs being run directly by the city itself, such as those implemented in the barangays and in our schools. So, like what we have done in previous years, we can only give them whatever financial aid we can afford and at a time when it can be accommodated by our cash flow. We hope this puts to rest this issue of Bacolod City heartlessly forsaking the Little League softball teams, as pictured by some public figures and some people in media.

Going back to sports activities being run by the city itself, the SK Federation headed by its President, Councilor Kevin Ramos, held a 3-point Shoot-out Basketball Challenge for youth, ages 15-17, from various barangays under the supervision of the Office of Youth and Sports Development or OYSD of our city.

We also ran a basketball tournament for young people in 2 categories: 10 teams for 12 under and 9 teams for 14 under. This was participated in by different private schools and commercial establishments. The teams from the University of St. La Salle took home the gold in both categories. We spent P259K for this tournament.

Basketball Sports Clinics organized by the OYSD staff for 12 and 14 under were periodically held in Barangays 10 and 35 with well-known basketball star, Mr. Maui Huelar, as instructor/trainer.

The city also co-sponsored the PBA All-Stars Weekend last April, 2008 which was attended by an overflow crowd from local and out-of-town residents. The media coverage of the event on national TV and newspapers was a great boost to our efforts in promoting Bacolod City to tourists and businessmen alike, not to mention the positive impact on our young people and other sports enthusiasts as they watch their favorite basketball superstars in a live game right before their eyes.

Last May 14, 2008 was a breakthrough for boxing in Bacolod. The Amateur Boxing Association of Bacolod or ABAB was formally organized with former Games and Amusement Board Chairman, Eduardo Villanueva, heading the list of boxing enthusiasts composing the group. ABAB is recognized officially by the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (ABAP) as a chapter and no less than ABAP Secretary-General Rogelio Fortaleza and ABAP Head for Region 6, Bebs Ciocon, inducted the local officials.

The city-wide barangay-based boxing tournament kicked off at the Sum-ag Gym with teams in the southern barangays participating. P371K has been allocated for this tournament.

The ABAB program is coordinated with the national organization and we are confident that with such guidance, our boxing program will go a long way in discovering and developing local talents.

It is also worthwhile mentioning that Mr. Rey Golingán, President of the Amateur Boxing Association of General Santos City, has volunteered to serve as our adviser. Of course, we all know that General Santos is where our world boxing champion, Manny Pacquiao, comes from and Mr. Golingán is considered among those who guided Manny Pacquiao in his early days in boxing.

In addition to sports activities, we also harnessed the energies of the young people in our barangays for other worthwhile civic projects. Our Public Affairs and Assistance Division organized the Barangay Youth Volunteers Brigade and gave them a series of seminars on first aid and disaster preparedness so that they can assist their barangays in times of calamities like fire, flood, earthquake and other disasters.

For helping us develop our Sports Program, we would like to thank Secretary to the Mayor, Atty. Goldwyn Nifras, and the officials and staff of the Office of Youth and Sports Development. We also commend the help of Councilor Kevin Ramos, Chairman of the SP Committee on Youth, SK Affairs, and Sports, on matters and activities relating to our young people.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

We come now to the aspect of disaster preparedness.

To improve our support systems, we reorganized the Bacolod Disaster Coordinating Council in August last year. Then, we strengthened the organization at the barangay level. As of this report cut-off, 47 Barangay Disaster Coordinating Councils have been synchronized with the mother

Council in terms of training and coordination. We hope to bring in the remaining 14 barangays into the system within this year.

We are happy to report that in addition to disaster rescue teams now formed in the barangays, we also have 12 private volunteer disaster rescue teams coming from the Amity Volunteer Fire Brigade, the Chamber Volunteer Fire Brigade, the Philippine National Red Cross, and the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Philippine Army Rescue Group is also on call for us.

These volunteer rescue teams are members of the Bacolod City Federation of Rescue Organizations. Presently, these volunteer teams have equipped themselves with 8 rubber boats, 2 jet skis, 1 rescue tender, 3 ambulances, 3 pump boats, 1 service truck, 1 pick-up and 1 utility van. These equipment augment whatever resources the city has for rescue operations. Of course, we also have the fire trucks of the city and those of the Amity and Chamber Volunteer Fire Brigades.

Earthquake drills in schools and some business establishments were held as well as water search and rescue drills with the assistance of these private volunteer teams.

Our Public Safety and Emergency Management Section also now maintains 24/7 a Code 117 Unit at the Bacolod Public Plaza to respond to medical emergencies. They also conduct free blood pressure reading every Monday morning at the City Mayor's Office.

During the recent Typhoon Frank and the big fire at Barangay 18, these rescue teams from private volunteer groups and the barangays went into action and saved many families who were flooded or burned out. That there were no lives lost during these recent disasters can be greatly attributed to their timely rescue efforts, both by land and water, which were also supported by the different departments of the city government like the Code 117 Unit, Bureau of Fire Protection, City Engineer's Office, Department of Public Services, DSSD, City Health Office, Public Affairs and Assistance Division and other units under the able leadership, at that time, of Acting Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson, in teamwork with the city councilors.

For their heroic work, we thank all the rescue volunteers, city government officials and employees who did their civic duty quietly and without fanfare.

We have been told by officials of the Office of Civil Defense-Region 6 that the disaster preparedness program of Bacolod City is at par, if not better, than those of other big coastal cities. For this, we have to thank the unselfish support of the private sector especially those from the Chamber Volunteer Fire Brigade and the Amity Volunteer Fire Brigade.

This is a great proof of the good that can come about when government and its citizens work together and help each other in an atmosphere of mutual respect and collaboration.

Let this be a continuing call for disaster preparedness in our own homes and neighborhoods. Look at the devastating experience of Panay, especially Iloilo City, during Typhoon Frank. Even after they have poured billions of pesos into their Flood Control Program, flood waters could still rise so quickly leaving many people stranded on the rooftops of their homes because they had no time to evacuate to higher ground. Let us pray our province and city does not suffer the same fate at some future time. While climate change alone has already given us problems, the recent experience of our neighbors tells us that nature's fury can be terrible indeed, and that is why we must be prepared.

PEACE AND ORDER

We come now to the area of peace and order.

We are happy to report that we have been blessed with a relatively peaceful year ending June 30, 2008 with no incidence of high profile crimes such as kidnapping, bank robbery, arson, liquidation, sabotage or violent terroristic incidents like bombings and other similar happenings.

Our Bacolod City Police Office or BCPO reported that total crime volume for the period registered at 518 incidents against 526 of the preceding 12 months. They also reported that the average monthly crime rate registered at 9.33% per 100,000 inhabitants while the Crime Solution Efficiency is at 93%.

The BCPO undertook measures to improve crime prevention by increasing visibility of its forces in crowded places and in identified crime-prone areas, intensifying its intelligence monitoring particularly in areas where there is a marked incidence of street crimes, undertaking more frequent saturation drives and random checkpoints in strategic areas, mobilizing force multipliers like barangay tanods and security guards and other anti-crime groups, and the like.

Intensified law enforcement operations also led to the arrest and filing of criminal charges against:

- 85 personalities engaged in illegal drugs;
- 94 persons engaged in illegal gambling;
- 37 persons with loose firearms;
- 229 persons involved in cellphone snatching and robbery hold-ups;
- 158 wanted persons, 20 of whom are facing capital offenses.

107 vehicles and 325 tricycles were also impounded with the enforcement of the "No Plate, No Travel Policy".

Other significant accomplishments of the BCPO involved the arrest and neutralization of various criminal gangs operating in Bacolod City. Specifically, these are the:

- Salisi gang suspects Michael Ray Contreras and Sheila Nuable;
- Baluyot/Mahinga Motorcycle Theft Gang;
- Gabornay Robbery Hold-up Gang (the arrest of 7 suspects from this gang led to the resolution of 85% of robbery/hold-up cases in Bacolod City)
- Temblor Group allegedly responsible for water meter and water pipe pilferages
- Sambilad Robbery Group allegedly responsible for arson with robbery.

For its good relations with the Muslim population in Bacolod, the BCPO was awarded as Best City Salaam Police Center for 2007 in the whole country by the PNP National Command.

A very positive note in this area is that the Bacolod City Peace and Order Council is a consistent finalist in the national search for the "Best City Peace and Order Council, Highly-urbanized City Category". Last year, we came out second only to Makati in this nation-wide contest, highlighted by awarding ceremonies in Malacañang Palace. Taking second place to Makati with its billions and seemingly unlimited resources for its peace and order programs is, to us, already a big victory.

As of April 22, 2008, there were 420 police officers assigned at the BCPO. Considering that our city population is now almost 500,000 people, this means that we only have 1 police officer for every 1,190 citizens. The ideal ratio is 1 police officer for every 500 citizens.

Comparatively speaking, we are a bigger city than Iloilo in terms of land area and population. While Bacolod City has a land area of 16,145 hectares, Iloilo City has only 8,080 hectares. Our population also exceeds theirs by some 81,000. However, Iloilo City has 601 police officers while we have only 420. That means that Iloilo City's police force ratio is 1 police officer for every 697 residents while our city has 1 police officer for every 1,190 residents.

In this regard, we have appealed personally to the PNP National Command thru PNP Chief Avelino Razon, Jr. if they can add another 200 officers to our police force. They are badly needed, especially for mobile patrols

at night and for traffic management. Many public transport drivers obey traffic rules only when police officers themselves direct the flow of traffic.

So far, 21 police officers have been added to the BCPO complement since that request was made. Definitely we need more than that but at least, we are getting some positive response already.

To augment funds from the national government for its operations, Bacolod City continued to provide financial support to the BCPO of about P12.3 million for the year ending June 30, 2008, part of which came from PAGCOR funds and part from the General Fund of the City. These were used to cover monthly cash allowances of P1,000 per personnel, gasoline allowances of P438K per month, and other maintenance and operating expenses.

In addition, the city spent P350K to renovate the office of the Traffic Management Unit/Bacolod Traffic Authority.

Presently, a new BCPO Headquarters is undergoing construction for a cost of P12.5 million. They have asked us to share in the cost but although we have agreed in principle, we still have to determine how much we can contribute to this project.

To our City Director, Police Senior Superintendent Ronilo Quebrar and the men and the women in his command, thank you for your work in keeping our city relatively safe and peaceful.

TRAFFIC

May I now report on traffic.

During the year ending June 30, 2008, the Traffic Management Unit and Bacolod Traffic Authority Offices or TMU/BTAO were reorganized for more effective management.

First, both offices were placed under one officer-in-charge so that there is quicker decision-making and tighter supervisory control over systems and personnel.

Second, an Engineering Unit was created under the BTAO set-up to take care of physical needs of traffic management such as installation and repair of traffic lights, filling up of potholes in major streets, setting up of traffic signs and other signages, putting up of road markings and barriers to guide the smoother flow of traffic, etc. Previously, all these were under the City Engineer's Office which was already swamped with a lot of work and projects. Providing the

BTAO with its own Engineering Unit has speeded up action on physical needs of traffic management.

Except for a minor change in the route of jeepneys plying the Libertad-Banago route, there was no major rerouting done within the period. However, we expect the Sangguniang Panlungsod to set up a new route of PUJs to and from the Government Center in time for its opening. We are also mulling a looping system around the block fronting UNO-R to provide for a smoother flow of traffic in that area.

We presently have a complement of 115 traffic enforcers which, from time to time, is augmented by 30 volunteers. These traffic enforcers have undergone several training sessions with the LTO-Regional Office and TMU on traffic rules and its enforcement. Discipline over these traffic enforcers was also tightened. The dismissal a few months back of 2 traffic enforcers for absenteeism instilled more discipline among them.

In the latter part of 2007, our traffic enforcers were stripped by the LTO of the authority to apprehend and confiscate licenses of erring drivers. LTO was supposed to do this job themselves. However, because they could not provide the manpower to do it and drivers started to ignore our traffic enforcers because they had no enforcement power anyway, we appealed to LTO to reinstate this authority because of the growing disorder in our streets. LTO eventually acceded and deputized 26 of our traffic enforcers only in February this year. We are presently working to add more names to this list.

From July to December, 2007, 423 drivers were apprehended during those months when our traffic enforcers could still do so. But with the return of the authority to apprehend erring drivers, our TMU/BTAO went into stricter enforcement mode. From January to June, 2008, 2,318 drivers were apprehended - - this is 448% more than the previous 6 months.

Corresponding fines from the issuance of the Temporary Operator's Receipt of LTO amounting to about P822K were all remitted to LTO. Sadly, the city could not directly share in these collected fines according to LTO guidelines although we did all the work for them. We hope that the national government will relent on this matter and directly share a part of these collected fines with LGUs if only to enable us to provide more incentives and bonuses to our traffic enforcers.

As far as erring trisikads and tricycles are concerned, a total of 5,739 units were apprehended. In the previous 12 months, this stood at only 1,090 apprehensions.

The TMU/BTAO Offices also strictly monitored stickers and permits for PUJs, taxis, tricycles, trisikads, truck vans of establishments in the city and from out-of-town so much so that for the first time in its history, it generated total

collections from this activity and for other services of a record P6 million. This is a 15% improvement over the previous period's total collections of P5.2 million.

The TMU/BTAO Offices also maintained open communication lines with officials of transport groups so that their problems can be attended to more quickly and feedback from them can be more readily accessed on anything concerning traffic and enforcement of traffic rules.

For smoother flow of traffic, we also installed 2 traffic lights at the intersections of La Salle-BS Aquino Drive and Burgos-Hilado Sts. during this report period. This brings to 12 the total number of traffic lights in the city, 6 or 50% of which were installed only within the last 3 years. The traffic lights at the Lopue's East intersection will rise soon once the road widening at the corners of that intersection will be finished.

One major achievement during the period is the passage of an ordinance for the establishment of a northbound terminal along the highway in Banago fronting Pepsi-Cola. Once operational, this will greatly reduce the number of public vehicles entering the city from the north. Even Ceres Liner has agreed to transfer its northbound terminal to that area in a show of cooperation with the city to improve our over-all traffic situation.

To make more areas in the city accessible, we have also undertaken to build more link roads. The one which connected Las Palmas to the Circumferential Road as mentioned earlier has already been completed. The others in the pipeline are:

- the link road from Barangay Taculing to Barangay Alijis National Highway Bridge
- the continuation of the Gatuslao St. Extension thru the back of Robinson's Place with a bridge
- the link road from Eoreco Subdivision to the Circumferential Road
- the widening of Burgos St. from San Juan to the bridge at Barangay 10, and
- arterial roads from Barangay Vista Alegre to Burgos-Granada Road.

Once completed, these link roads will make more areas easily reachable and provide alternate routes to help decongest traffic on over-used roads.

We have been blessed with the help of private groups like Bantay Banwa, Bantay Bayan and various motorcycle clubs which volunteer to do traffic watch and even assist during traffic accidents, motorcades and special events like the MassKara Festival and All Souls' Day. Bantay Banwa, in particular, donated more than 100 vertical street signages worth almost half a million pesos

We are also grateful to the Living Way Christian Ministry through Pastor Efren de la Cruz which provided accident insurance, raincoats and boots to our traffic enforcers.

To all these generous citizens, thank you for all the help that you are giving the city.

For all these initiatives to improve our traffic management, we would like to acknowledge with great thanks Councilor Wilson Gamboa, Jr., who is the Chairman of the SP Committee on Transportation and Traffic, as well as Police Senior Inspector Levy Pangué and the officials and staff of the TMU/BTAO Offices. We would also like to commend all our traffic enforcers and encourage them to be more dedicated to their duties because their city needs them.

STREETLIGHTING

In line with the plan to light up more streets as part of our program for peace and order, public safety, and tourism, we are happy to report that we have completed streetlighting projects worth P12.1 million while another P685K are ongoing.

Among the main ones that were completed are tourism lights along Manokan Country, 6th Street from Corner Lacson to Hilado St., Galo St. from Lopez-Jaena to Hilado St., Cuadra St. from Gatuslao to Lacson St., Rizal St. from Corner Lacson to Corner Lopez Jaena St., Hilado St., Luzuriaga St. from Corner Lacson to Mabini St., San Sebastian St. from Corner Lacson to Locsin St., Magsaysay Road from Corner Lacson to Corner Taculing Road, Taculing Road from Corner Hernaez Ext. to Corner Magsaysay Ave.

A closer monitoring of non-functioning streetlights was also made so that repairs and maintenance work can be done more quickly.

We continue to be plagued by theft of electrical wires but not as much as in previous years. For this, we would like to thank barangay tanods and our policemen for their greater vigilance and the officials and staff of the Electrical Division of the City Engineer's Office for their work.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

The new slaughterhouse is another major project that we have long dreamed of. It was 9 years ago, in 1999, when then Congressman John Orola had the building constructed at a cost of P20 million. Efforts to complete the project during the intervening years failed, and for many years, the building

remained unused and has started to deteriorate. But seeing the great need of Bacolod City for a cleaner and modern slaughterhouse pushed this administration to work for the completion of the project. Now, after 9 years, this is another dream come true for our city.

AVM Bernardo Engineering, Inc., contractor for this Add-Operate-and-Transfer project, has invested P54 million into the venture. This facility is now the largest mechanized slaughterhouse in Western Visayas in terms of size and capacity.

The new slaughterhouse is classified as a double A facility which means that meat slaughtered there can be sold outside of Bacolod City. This will be a good opportunity for our cattle and hog raisers who would like to ship to the Metro Manila market. Small meat raisers can be assisted to form cooperatives so that they too can avail of expanded business opportunities.

As it is now, Metro Manila is getting a lot of their meat from Mindanao. This facility will provide good competition for that because it will be cheaper for meat traders to use our slaughterhouse instead, because of the savings in transport cost.

About a year ago, the old slaughterhouse was featured on national television. Sad to say, it was not positive at all. The dilapidated structures, inadequate instruments and equipment, and the general unsanitary conditions were the focus of the presentation that was viewed all over the country. But after all is said and done, what is most important is . . . that **now**, Bacolodnons will have cleaner meat from the markets.

The project was inaugurated last August 16, 2008. Initial operations came with the usual "birth pains" which the contractor is attending to.

As to the complaints of some residents of Barangay 35 whose livelihood will be disrupted with the closure of the old slaughterhouse, many of them have been hired by the new slaughterhouse. For those who were not, we will do our best to help them get back on their feet. To enable these people to have enough time to adjust to the change in their circumstances, we have mutually agreed with AVM Bernardo Engineering, Inc. to grant an extension until November 2, 2008 for the closure of the old slaughterhouse.

May we thank the leaders of the Catholic Church led by His Excellency, Bishop Vicente Navarra, Rev. Fr. Aniceto Buenafe and Rev. Fr. Virgilio Mahinay for facilitating a dialogue with these affected residents of Barangay 35 and for helping forge a peaceful resolution of a volatile situation.

This project for a modern and clean slaughterhouse for Bacolod City was dreamed of in the 1990's yet. Several attempts were already made in the past to

build it but somehow, it never really got off the ground. But thanks to the resolve of your public officials, this project is now a reality.

At this point, may we acknowledge and thank Councilor Alex Paglomutan, Chairman of the SP Committee on Markets and Slaughterhouse for his help in pursuing the successful completion of this project. Our thanks also go to the other city officials who gave this project their unqualified support.

CITY HALL SERVICES & EMPLOYEES

On City Hall services, the move of our offices to the Government Center will streamline the paper trail and shorten processing time between departments involved in the transaction flow.

From the slide, you can see that our offices are presently located in 9 various places in the city. This has greatly hampered the efficient flow of papers and coordination in between departments and has sometimes even caused the loss of papers between offices distantly located from each other. Once we are all at the Government Center, Bacolodnons can avail of the services of these different offices under one roof.

Once we have all moved to the Government Center, we will hold a grand inauguration and festivities to celebrate this great milestone for our city. Please consider this notice already as an advance open invitation to all Bacolodnons to this historic occasion. The exact date will be announced later.

For City Hall employees' welfare, we have continued to release on time their salaries, bonuses and other cash benefits. In addition, we have approved a 10% across-the-board salary increase for permanent employees effective July 1, 2008 in compliance with Executive Order No. 719 of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, chargeable against local funds. The Sangguniang Panlungsod has already appropriated the funds for this. It is another indication of the good financial condition of our city -- that we are able to afford this increase right way.

Many of our officials and employees have also undergone seminars here or out-of-town to enhance knowledge about their respective fields and update them on the latest policies and programs of the national government that need to be implemented through the LGUs.

We have Councilor Reynold Iledan, Chairman of the SP Committee on Human Resource Development, to thank for his support in the various programs intended to benefit our City Hall employees.

In terms of computer systems improvement, the Management Information Technology and Computer Services or MITCS successfully launched last

December, 2007 the on-line billing and receipt issuance system for real property taxes in the Land Tax Division of the City Treasurer's Office. We thank them for the effort in making our City Hall services more efficient for Bacolodnons.

May we also acknowledge and thank Atty. Allan Zamora and his staff at the City Legal Office for their indispensable help on the many day-to-day legal issues affecting our work. In times like these, when it is very clear that the game plan of our political enemies is to destroy our image by filing cases against us by the dozen, definitely, Atty. Zamora is our "Man of the Hour".

We are also grateful to the staff of the City Mayor's Office headed by Secretary to the Mayor, Atty. Goldwyn Nifras, as well as the Executive Assistants to the City Mayor for their liaison work with the various units of the city government. Their coordination work helped us implement projects more quickly and brought us feedback from the ground that enabled us to respond more appropriately to the needs of the sectors they take care of. To them all, our grateful thanks and our challenge for even more effective public service in the months ahead.

Last but surely not the least, we would like to emphasize that these achievements and services rendered to our city would not have been possible without the cooperation and support of Vice Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson and the members of the Sangguniang Panlungsod. Never before have we experienced such teamwork as now existing between the executive and legislative branches of your city government. We have given our elected officials many challenging tasks and they have lived up to the demands of the work that had to be done. Yes, they have done their share in making our city a better place to live in. And for this, please join me in a round of applause to commend and appreciate these officials of our city.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ladies and gentlemen, we have reported to you the highlights of what your city government has done for you over the past 12 months ending June 30, 2008.

May we give you now a summary of the major concerns we intend to focus on for the next 2 years. These are on the areas of:

- solid waste management -- particularly the establishment of a sanitary landfill & material recovery facilities, reduction of waste volume at source

- flood control projects – more drainage declogging and improvement; clearing of waterways
- landbanking for relocation sites – acquiring an additional relocation site and making it habitable
- health service facilities – setting up mobile clinics to reach poorer sections more frequently; implement options for hospital services
- traffic improvement – pursue the establishment of the northbound terminal, more traffic enforcers or police officers on the streets, more road arteries to decongest traffic chokepoints, continuing traffic education for enforcers and motorists alike
- anti-poverty programs – expanded livelihood and skills training programs, linkages with private sector institutions, marketing assistance to micro-economic enterprises, food sufficiency programs
- social services to the poor – expanded programs for children, women, families, senior citizens and other under-privileged sectors
- education – more practical vocational courses and scholarships.

FULL SPEED AHEAD!

With these plans in mind, it is now time to look forward. We do not need to tell you how difficult the months ahead would be. Inflationary pressures are being felt all over while incomes remain constant and take-home pay is buying less and less everyday.

In the midst of all these, perhaps it is necessary to remember that we have all experienced tough times in the past, times when difficulties seemed insurmountable. But with faith in God's mercy and kindness, faith in ourselves and in each other, and a lot of hard work, we prevailed and triumphed over these past trials and difficulties.

Over the last 4 years alone, our city has progressed by leaps and bounds. We are outpacing many cities of comparable size in development and vibrancy of community life.

True, we may have to face the next few years with guarded optimism because of adverse economic developments beyond our control, but face it, we will, with the courage and the "never say die" attitude that has allowed our people to survive and grow even stronger.

Because of the global oil price crisis, threatening food shortage, and the slow down in the U.S. economy, all of which are affecting us, we can say we are in troubled times. Yes, we have to face these realities.

But these circumstances today remind us also of how it was when we started to pursue the plans to build our Government Center. We remember distinctly how the details and complexities almost “drowned” us. Because of the magnitude of the project, the procedures, requirements and regulations alone that we had to comply with were already overwhelming.

But what really made matters worse were the opposition, intrigues, machinations, sabotage and “torpedoes” thrown against us by our political opponents who were driven by their burning desire to block us from achieving our goal. They wanted us to fail.

It was during those troubled times that when faced with seemingly insurmountable adversities and the ultimate challenge from “torpedoes” and saboteurs, we stood firm, we moved on, we barreled through and we declared **“DAMN THE TORPEDOES, FULL SPEED AHEAD”**.

Because of our resolve and determination, we now have this new Government Center. So my beloved people of Bacolod, even if, in a manner of speaking, we will go through rough seas, hurricanes and typhoons in the months ahead, let us go FULL SPEED AHEAD!

We are a resilient people. We are a people of hope. Let us go **FULL SPEED AHEAD** and treat our present difficulties not as burdens but as opportunities in disguise.

Let us count our blessings and be thankful for them. Let us give back to God the glory for His manifold mercies upon our people.

Times ahead will be difficult but together, helping each other, **we will survive!**

For generations now, we, Bacolodnons, have shared an open secret amongst ourselves. Now, that secret has been revealed to the whole country. And this secret is

BACOLOD CITY IS THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES!

No less than MoneySense, a prestigious business magazine, with an editorial board composed of highly-respected business leaders, economists and professionals, has cited Bacolod City, in its March-April 2008 issue, as the **best**

place to live in the Philippines, outranking even Makati, Davao, Marikina and 16 other more developed cities.

Bacolod City bested them all in the 3 major categories of standard of living, quality of life and cost of living which were the essential criteria used to compare one city with the other.

This honor is the honor of every Bacolodnon because each of us in our individual and collective ways made our city shine brighter than the rest.

This citation is WELL-DESERVED. Because it is true. And I am very sure, you all agree. Our city indeed, is the best place to live in the Philippines!

So my beloved people of Bacolod, let us help each other keep it that way.

Madamu gid nga salamat sa inyo tanan.

MABUHAY AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL!

