

**Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Alvarez's Remarks
Industry Forum
Thursday, May 21, 2009
Port of Miami**

Good morning. I am very pleased to be here again for the second Industry Forum for architects, engineers and contractors. Last year, when we organized our first Industry Forum...we knew what was coming: a slowdown in economy, a steep decline in the housing market...today we know we are in the midst of the most severe economic downturn since the 1930's. And, while the economists debate whether we have hit bottom...whether there is light at the end of the tunnel...whether the national recession will end in 2009, 2010...or beyond, the people in this room can agree on one thing: these are tough times for the building industry – and you don't have to be an engineer, architect or contractor to feel the pain. Your industry supports thousands of well-paid jobs in our community – and the ripple effect of the downturn can be felt throughout South Florida.

While local government cannot provide all the solutions, there are things we can do to help cushion the effects of current economic conditions – including getting work out on the street as quickly as possible. It is the right time for local government to ramp up its capital programs; and we are fortunate in that there is a great deal on the drawing board.

When we first envisioned the new baseball stadium, job creation was not an issue – in fact, when the Adrienne Arsht Performing Arts Center was under construction just a few years ago, one of our biggest challenges was finding enough skilled labor to complete the job – with dozens of cranes lining the Miami skyline...contractors were competing for workers.

Times have changed, and job creation is now a priority. The baseball stadium will create jobs – construction could begin as early as July and hundreds of construction jobs will follow. These are good paying jobs that will last for at least the next three years. Plus, having a world class baseball stadium will contribute to long-term employment, revitalize the neighborhood, expand our urban core, and entertain thousands of residents and visitors. I firmly believe the stadium is a sound investment in our community, one that will pay dividends both now and later.

I am also continuing to push, and push hard, for construction of a tunnel to link this seaport with our Interstate System. The long proposed tunnel is truly a project of local, state and regional

significance. Along with Miami International Airport, the port is a powerful economic engine, not only in South Florida, but for entire state. Our port supports nearly 180,000 jobs and generates more than \$17 billion to our local economy. What you see behind me is a waterway that that carries close to one million containers of cargo in and out of Miami every year. The building industry can only be as healthy as our local economy – and the growth of international trade is critical to our future.

We expect to hear from the State before June 1 on whether this project – one that has been discussed for more than 20 years – will finally move forward. When you talk about “shovel ready” and “critical infrastructure” projects that should be receiving funding as part of government economic stimulus initiatives, I cannot think of a more appropriate economic project for our region than the port tunnel.

As Johnny Martinez said, the purpose of today’s forum is to hear from you...and together discuss ways we can work together more efficiently. I believe we are heading in the right direction. A year ago, long before the phrase “economic stimulus” became part of the nightly news, the County created a local economic stimulus package that accelerates the County’s contracting process. This is something you asked for...

Working with the County Commission – and thank you Chairman Moss...you were a strong supporter of this effort – Miami-Dade adopted an economic stimulus ordinance on July 17, 2008. This legislation has allowed the County to expedite the contracting process over the last ten months. To date, we have accelerated nearly half a billion (\$482) dollars in contracts – and my office, together with Chairman Moss, are now working together to extend this important initiative beyond this year. Now, more than ever, we’re on the same page about getting our capital projects underway...and keeping Miami-Dade County’s economy moving during these challenging economic times.

I have instructed the County Manager to make this a top priority for the County’s capital departments. Many of them are here today, and you will hear from them later in the program. They will be held accountable for expediting, to the extent possible, the County’s capital program...whether its building a baseball stadium in Little Havana or installing new drainage in flood prone neighborhoods of West Dade – I want these contracts out on the street...and whenever possible, the work should go to local people.

Thank you Johnny, and your staff for organizing this event. I look forward to today's dialogue, to continue building an even stronger partnership between your industry and our government...as we look for strategies to weather challenging economic times.