



CAYMAN ISLANDS
GOVERNMENT

2008 THRONE SPEECH

Delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Mr Stuart Jack, CVO

10 a.m. Wednesday, 30 April 2008 / Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly Building

Madam Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly:

The past year has reminded us of the many challenges that can face us – whether Hurricane Dean, issues affecting the public service, or recently, question marks about the economy. But if we look around at other countries which struggle with even greater challenges, we realise that these Islands remain blessed.

We must not, however, be complacent as we look forward to the year ahead. In view of international economic developments, in particular the state of the US economy and high commodity prices, Government must be especially prudent in its budgetary plans. Political and social developments in other countries that can impact the Cayman Islands must also be monitored carefully, and we must not neglect efforts to build our relationships with the United Kingdom and with our neighbours, nor with emerging powerful economies further afield.

Nor must we be complacent about developments in our own country. The Cayman Islands have many strengths, but we must work to maintain and indeed reinforce them. In some cases, that means we must be prepared to adapt to change. I would highlight a few key areas.

Law and order are fundamental to our well-being. Despite recent problems affecting the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, I am determined that we will police these Islands effectively and with integrity. I am keen to work with the Government and the Judiciary across the criminal justice agenda, particularly on better ways of tackling the problems of youth at risk, of preventing re-offending, and of rehabilitating offenders through the courts, the prisons and the parole system.

Another foundation of this country is **good governance**. Many positive changes are already in hand, such as Freedom of Information, public meetings of the Public Accounts Committee, and an Anti-Corruption Bill shortly to come before you. I will soon be taking forward other proposals in the wake of the recent Commission of Enquiry. And the efforts to improve the skills and customer service ethos of the civil service will continue. The ongoing Constitutional review process is also very much about good governance and enshrining our well-established respect for human rights.

We must not take for granted either our economy or our beautiful environment, nor see them as somehow rivals for our attention.

To ensure that the pillars of our **economy** continue to flourish, a good dialogue between government and industry is vital, notably in the area of financial services where we must respond to both market developments and international regulatory demands. But we must not forget the consumer, the ordinary members of our community, who are concerned about high prices and want to see the benefits of competition and better job opportunities.

We must do more to protect our **natural heritage**, our mangroves, forests, plants and wildlife, while also as far as possible taking care over property rights which are so valued by many Caymanians. Sometimes that will require difficult decisions and imaginative solutions.

We need to think longer term about the future of these Islands. The Government is already planning for the future in many areas – in education, infrastructure, social policies. One area that needs more attention, and now, is **climate change** – both to reduce our emissions (as I am trying to do at Government House) and to devise adaptation strategies. In part related to that are our continuous efforts to learn from experience to improve these Islands' resilience to disasters. With this in mind we will be carrying out more exercises, including in the Sister Islands.

I am also hopeful that we will soon launch an important project to put together what is called **sustainable development strategy** or, put more simply, a joined-up effort across Government and the community to chart the future of these Islands so as to maintain our prosperity, our social fabric and values, and our environment for future generations.

And, as we also enter the month of the child, we must not neglect today the needs of our children and **youth**. Good work is in hand, particularly on education, a new Children's Law, the Youth Assembly, and the treatment of juveniles in trouble. But more needs to be done in other areas affecting our youth. And that is a challenge not just for Government or this Legislature but, above all, for the community as a whole and parents in particular.

I now turn to the plans of various Departments, Portfolios and Ministries.

I. The Audit Office

Primary objectives for the **Cayman Islands Audit Office** are to:

- conduct three new value-for-money audits. These will centre on construction projects; Customs' waivers and duties; and building issues faced in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman; and
- to complete work on five ongoing projects, which deal with project management within government and government administration.

II. The Cabinet Office

In support of its strategic objectives, **Cabinet Office** priorities for 08/09 include:

- the coordination of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, which will follow from the National Assessment of Living Conditions; and
- the establishment of a national identification system.

By October 2008 the **Fol Unit** will complete necessary preparations to ensure successful implementation of the Freedom of Information Law in January 2009.

Another element in that success will be **Computer Services Department's** Fol tracking system, and enhancement of the **gov.ky** website.

The **Protocol Office** will identify and adopt regional best practices to augment protocol procedures in the Cayman Islands.

And, once the referendum is held, the **Constitutional Modernisation Secretariat** will prepare for negotiations with the UK, and provide technical support for the negotiating team.

III. The Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs

For the **Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs**, 2008/09 objectives are clear-cut. They are to enhance public safety and security, through improved facilities and equipment; innovative uses of resources; and improved monitoring of the delivery of key services. These objectives will be facilitated by:

- completing the Bodden Town Emergency Response Centre;
- constructing a new prison, reducing costs by using inmates' skills; and
- introducing the administrative granting of certain categories of work permits.

The **Royal Cayman Islands Police Service** remains firmly committed to ensuring the security of the Cayman Islands. The service's **Marine Unit** will be greatly strengthened by the completion of secure berthing facilities and the acquisition of additional patrol and interception units, both of which are now underway.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands will complete the design of the National Emergency Operations Centre, to be sited on an elevated parcel of land in George Town.

IV. The Portfolio of the Civil Service

During fiscal year 2008/09, the **Portfolio of the Civil Service** will promote and facilitate management and HR best practice, centred on key initiatives such as succession planning, performance management, and preparations to introduce performance-related pay. Two staffing-related initiatives are also central to the portfolio's objectives:

- The HR Audit Programme will expand to target compliance across a broader range of areas, and to introduce theme investigations across all civil service entities, as well as support for self-evaluation.
- The Portfolio will also introduce and maintain a registry of retired civil servants, as a resource for short-term employment opportunities within government.

The **Civil Service College** will expand with the spearheading of a regional initiative to develop the college as a shared resource among the Overseas Territories.

V. The Portfolio of Legal Affairs

The **Portfolio of Legal Affairs** will work with other agencies on a comprehensive, coordinated criminal justice strategy. This strategy will include alternative sentencing, post-incarceration initiatives, and prison reforms, as well as early intervention programmes for at-risk youth.

The Attorney General's Chambers will also present amendments to laws relating to children, so that they will be better protected in the area of child pornography and in relation to witness protection.

VI. The Portfolio of Finance & Economics

In line with the objectives for the **Portfolio of Finance & Economics**, the **Treasury Department** will:

- assist ministries and portfolios with completing annual reports for the 05-06, 06-07, and 07-08 financial years; and
- launch a website on which government tenders can be advertised and documents downloaded.

The priorities of the **Economics and Statistics Office** will be to:

- develop a new consumer price index basket;
- develop the Cayman Islands' first system of national accounts; and
- prepare for the 2010 Census.

Due to economic and environmental factors, the **Customs**

Department will focus on:

- risk-based enforcement activities, especially pertaining to containerised cargo; and
- upgrading the automated declaration processing system.

Finally, the **General Registry** will implement its electronic filing and storage system.

VII. The Ministry of District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing

Objectives for the **Ministry of District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing** include strategies and programmes to more effectively plan Cayman's growth, while also improving public safety. Key aspects include:

- the release of the 2008 Development Plan, a long-range comprehensive document that will guide land use and development on Grand Cayman;
- the **Planning Department's** implementation of the Builders Bill, which is designed to protect homeowners and construction personnel by regulating the construction industry; and,
- in the Sister Islands, expansion plans for the **District Administration** Building, and a new building for the **Mosquito Research and Control Unit.**

MRCU will also gain a custom-built hangar on Grand Cayman. Further, given regional and worldwide increases in the incidence of mosquito-transmitted diseases, MRCU will launch an expanded disease prevention programme.

Lastly, several large capital projects will be directed by the ministry, including the new government office building, which is the country's largest civic project to date; and an improved courts building.

VIII. The Ministry of Health and Human Services

The **Ministry of Health and Human Services** has a twofold objective: to analyse and explain the status of human wellbeing in Cayman and, subsequently, to restructure its responses to the challenges that are revealed. In support of human wellbeing, the Ministry intends to strengthen the connections between social and economic development, in line with its vision of *Optimal Wellbeing for All*.

The following initiatives will therefore be taken, for the genuinely vulnerable.

- The drafting of a new Mental Health Law and the start of purpose-built residential facilities for persons with mental health needs.
- Provision of a purpose-built youth therapeutic facility for children in trouble.
- And the expansion of homes and programmes for the elderly.

The ministry will also oversee a new governance model for the **Health Services Authority**, and restructure **Public Health** as a full-fledged department. Correcting shortcomings in the Health Insurance Law will be another primary goal.

The **Department of Children and Family Services** will be restructured as well, creating a dedicated Department of Children's Services. In addition, a Community Empowerment and Development Agency will be created to foster community-based initiatives.

An officer of gender affairs will also be appointed in 08/09 to review and update the draft National Gender Policy, and to spearhead the establishment of an Office of Gender Affairs.

Standards of professional practice will be enhanced by making the **Health Insurance Commission and the Health Practice Commission** a single health services regulatory agency. An updated Pharmacy Law will also be drafted.

IX. The Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture

In the next fiscal year, the **Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture** will focus on expanding secondary education, and on professional development for educators. Both are in preparation for the transition to three new secondary campuses on Grand Cayman in September 2010. In Cayman Brac, land will be acquired for a new secondary school. Also:

- educational services for persons with disabilities – from early years to adulthood – will be aligned, with more programmes and services offered; and
- the Education Law, and employment legislation, will be updated.

X. The Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure

Objectives for the **Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure** will centre upon infrastructure support. This will entail:

- the **National Roads Authority's** completion of major roads, including the east-west arterial, and the Esterley Tibbetts and Queen's highways; and
- **Water Authority** improvements to the water-supply infrastructure. This will include pipeline-extension work in eastern districts, where a reverse-osmosis plant and a pumping station are scheduled. Piped-water supplies will also start in the Brac.
- In addition, the **Department of Environmental Health** will begin its new recycling efforts which will reduce the amount of waste in our landfills.

Both the NRA and the **Department of Vehicle and Driver's Licensing** will be relocated out of the central business district, and **Radio Cayman** will replace analog instruments with digital equipment.

The Ministry also will revise the Traffic and National Roads Authority laws; as well as sections of the cinematograph; postal; public health; water (production and supply); and the information and communications technology laws.

XI. The Ministry of Tourism, Environment, Investment and Commerce

The **Ministry of Tourism, Environment, Investment and Commerce** will diversify our tourism product, particularly by expanding the Go East policy. An additional focus will be the strengthening of Cayman's environmental protection efforts.

Accordingly:

- the Go East policy will be fully realised, with the tabling of the policy framework; establishment of an integrated council; and the creation of specially designed facilities within the eastern districts, beginning in Bodden Town.
- Furthermore, at the **Department of Environment**, staff will implement a project titled *Enhancing Capacity for Adaptation to Climate Change*. In consultation with other agencies, it also will develop a national climate-change adaptation strategy.

The Go East policy and the new National Tourism Management Plan will be presented in the House shortly. In addition, the ministry will present key legislation for environmental conservation, public transport, and liquor licensing.

Conclusion

Madam Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly:

In conclusion I would like to recognise firstly the many civil servants who have helped to devise these plans and who will be tasked to implement them, and secondly the members of the community who play a vital role on statutory boards and consultative groups.

I pray that God will guide your work in the Legislative Assembly, and the work of everyone involved in the government of these Islands; and that He will continue to watch over and protect us.

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