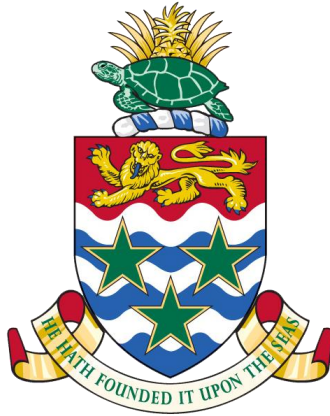




CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

2017 THRONE SPEECH

Delivered by
Her Excellency the Governor, Helen Kilpatrick, CB

October 2017 / Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly Building

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I join you in this House for my last time, and will outline the Government's plans for its first two-year budget, covering the financial years 2018 and 2019.

The agenda of the new Government of National Unity seeks to live up to the promise of that name. I will outline a programme of work that will strengthen the economy, as well as empower and enhance the lives of all who live on these Islands.

Over the next two years, the Government will continue the major projects begun by the last administration. These include Owen Roberts International Airport, a long-term mental health facility, the integrated solid waste management system, and the cruise berthing and expanded cargo port project.

There will also be continuing investment in the infrastructure of Little Cayman and Cayman Brac.

The promise of robust economic growth is the foundation for these commitments. All the key indicators, from tourism arrival records, to new development projects, and ship registrations, point in this direction.

The Government has also committed to ensuring that Caymanians have access to the increased employment opportunities that result from this economic growth.

Since the majority of people in the Cayman Islands work in businesses with between one to five employees, the Government will engage with, and support, the small business sector.

The Government will maintain a direct working relationship with the Small Business Association, and continue a programme of reduced fees to encourage both small business creation, and growth.

A strategically driven public sector will help to keep spending focused where it should be, and thus facilitate the reduction of fees. Over the next two years our, exceptionally able, Deputy Governor will lead efforts to build a world-class civil service. A civil service that is equipped to steer the Cayman Islands into a bold new future.

Legislative and policy work by the independent and constitutional commissioners, including the newly created Office of the Ombudsman, will support the practice of good governance.

With a growing economy poised to have a positive impact on employment, we must ensure our people are ready to take advantage of these opportunities. In order to achieve this, the Government will renew its focus on education.

The Government will complete the remaining facilities at John Gray High School and will also make improvements to primary schools.

From a legislative perspective, the new Education Law devolves greater authority to schools in relation to their own management and decision-making. It is the Government's belief that this autonomy will enhance the education system.

Other plans focus on the provision of good quality education through technical and vocational training, as well as through traditional academic paths.

The Government places a similar emphasis on meeting the social needs of the people of the Cayman Islands. In particular, the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities, including older people, families in need, and children.

Meeting these needs will take place through organisational restructuring, and a collaborative approach to providing services that include partnerships with public and private sector stakeholders.

Of course, a strong community is also a healthy community. The Government has committed to improvements in the availability of quality healthcare, and to reviewing the healthcare market. It is important that people have access to quality healthcare that is affordable to them.

In the area of crime reduction, proposals to strengthen crime prevention and security focus heavily on stakeholder empowerment, a recurring theme for this Government.

When it comes to security, we all benefit from a shared sense of ownership of the issue. The Royal Cayman Islands Police Service is working to continue to develop community policing.

I agree with the Commissioner that such an approach should form the foundation for all work by the Police on crime reduction and prevention. This will help to rebuild trust and confidence in the police by members of the public.

To enable this to happen, the Government will recruit 75 new police officers over the next three years, of which about a third will be working on community policing.

The Government has also indicated its eagerness to discuss the creation of a Police Authority with me and with Her Majesty's Government. A Police Authority that would be devolved some authority for policing. Whilst no outcome to these discussions can be pre-determined, I welcome the conversation.

From a judicial perspective, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions will establish a Justice Protection Administrative Centre, which will then develop a witness protection programme.

The Government is also committing additional funding to strengthen border control, with assistance from the United Kingdom.

Over the next few years the Government's work to reduce crime, and the fear of crime, for all those who call the Cayman Islands home, will also encompass our children.

To this end, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub Team will continue its work to protect the youngest among us, with a focus on prevention and intervention.

Improvements to cyber-security are also planned. This work is extremely timely, as several e-government initiatives will be rolled out in the coming year.

Turning now to a more international perspective. The Cayman Islands status as a well regulated international financial centre, with a high reputation internationally, is critical to our economy, and we are now home to more than 100 nationalities. The Government intends that the plans outlined in this year's budget will continue to strengthen the Cayman Islands standing in the world.

With regards to the United Kingdom's intention to leave the European Union, the Cayman Islands Government has had input into the negotiations through Joint Ministerial council meetings in London.

I am pleased to report that the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Cayman Islands Government remains strong, and both are committed to working together on this and other issues in the future.

Meanwhile, Government leaders will also personally engage with the European Union Commission in order to increase EU ministers' understanding of our financial services industry, and its strong compliance with international legislation and regulation.

Closer to home, the Government recently played a key role in providing humanitarian and security assistance to our fellow British Overseas Territories devastated by hurricanes Irma and Maria.

The Premier went on to share the message in the UK, highlighting to British ministers the needs of our sister territories who are struggling to rebuild their lives and their economies.

The Government has also facilitated the temporary relocation of employees from those territories to the Cayman Islands, as businesses there were badly disrupted by the hurricanes. Here they are able to continue their work and contribute to their local economies.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Cayman Islands Government and people for the generous assistance provided to other Overseas Territories. You took on a leadership role and reached out a helping hand to our neighbours who had experienced so much hardship this Hurricane Season. I am sure they will reciprocate if the Cayman Islands are ever in similar need.

I would like to end with a few personal messages.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate all members of the new House on their victories in the polls, and to wish them every success in serving their communities well.

For the past four years, I have been honoured and proud to be the Governor of the Cayman Islands. I am grateful to all those who have worked alongside me towards our

shared goal of ensuring that the Cayman Islands have the governance and administration that is worthy of the people of these Islands.

I am also grateful to all members of the Cabinet, and particularly the Honourable Premier, for maintaining cordial relationships and a productive working environment.

And I must make special mention of the Ministry of Finance, and all other staff, who work tirelessly each year to ensure these budget meetings are a success.

Next March I will begin a new chapter in my life back in the UK. Although my daughter and I will be leaving these beautiful islands, we will never forget the warmth and kindness the people of the Cayman Islands have shown us.

At the same time, we are excited to see what the future holds for this territory, which is so full of potential. I look forward to hearing of the continued prosperity and progress of the people of the Cayman Islands in the years ahead.

May God bless the Cayman Islands.