

Statement by the Honourable Deputy Governor
HR Matters – Employee Engagement Survey, HR Savings and Employment
Opportunities for Caymanian Graduates
10th December 2020

Mister Speaker, I rise today to share with the Parliament and the general public 3 three important and outstanding achievements by the Civil Service and the Government. Mr Speaker to deliver this news at the end of a year that was laden with significant and unique challenges is most pleasing.

Minister Speaker no one in this honourable House is unaware of the economic, financial and human impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic brought with it. Despite this, the Civil Service working with the elected Government persevered and delivered exceptional results, above and beyond any expectations that may have been set at the beginning of the year.

Mister Speaker, on the topic of delivering exceptional results, I would like to use this opportunity to highlight extraordinary outcomes that the Civil Service achieved in 2020 in spite of the many challenges that we encountered.

The first major achievement that I would like to highlight is the financial management of Human resources costs across the Civil Service.

Mr Speaker you will recall that within weeks of the COVID- 19 lock down members of the public begin calling for civil service salaries to be cut. Mr Speaker i thank the Premier and his Government for resisting this call.

Mr Speaker to cut the salaries of the very people that were leading our fight against the pandemic would have been a disaster and a moral killer for the service. Moreover, Mr Speaker curtailing civil service spending would have delayed our economic recovery and would have likely caused some businesses to close.

However, Mr Speaker my Leadership Team understood very clearly that the civil service had to respond to the challenges the Government was experiencing in relation to a dramatic reduction in revenue. Given this we developed innovative ways to reduce our human resources costs. As a result Mr Speaker I am most pleased to announce today that at the end of October the Civil Service has achieved a \$10m reduction in HR costs. Mr Speaker i am pleased to say that despite this significant reduction in costs our service levels were not compromised in the areas most critical to the Government's pandemic response. In fact, most, if not all of those areas provided higher levels of service to ensure an advantageous result in our fight against COVID-19. Mr Speaker I know you will agree that this is an outstanding achievement.

Mister Speaker, with these savings and financial support agreed in principle with the Cabinet, I am able to report on the second

extraordinary outcome. Mr Speaker over the past few years we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of returning Caymanians graduates seeking employment within the civil service. Mr Speaker we have had some success securing employment for our talented Caymanians. For example we created a trainee post in our Anti Money Laundering Unit and employed a young Caymanian graduate. Mr Speaker that program has been successful with the Caymanain being promoted out of the trainee post. The Unit is now seeking to bring in another Caymanain trainee. We have had similar success in the Ministry of Health, The Ministry of District Administration, The department of community rehabilitation and at the Prison service. However, Mr Speaker we are unable to achieve these results across the Civil Service. Mr Speaker the single barrier is funding. Departments do not have the flexibility built into their budgets to consistently offer training and employment opportunities for our young Caymanians. Mr Speaker all of that changed on Tuesday when I received approval in

principle from Cabinet to utilise up to \$1m in HR savings to create a central fund managed by the Portfolio of the Civil Service to fund the employment and training of our Caymanians graduates and provide training for existing civil servants who wish to engage in secondment opportunities to gain experience and skills. Mr Speaker I wish to record my profound thanks to the Premier and Cabinet colleagues for their universal support. Mr Speaker I can say without reservation that I have never received a faster Cabinet approval for a recommendation. In fact Mr Speaker my request was for \$500k but thanks to a suggestion from Minister Seymour all members of cabinet agreed to the sum of \$1m. Mr Speaker this sum of money can make the lives of so many Caymanians better by providing employment and training opportunities. Mr Speaker this program is very timely given the reduction of job opportunities in the private sector as a result of the affects of COVID 19. Beginning in the first quarter of 2021, the Civil Service will be able to provide temporary employment opportunities to Caymanian graduates

who are experiencing difficulties finding work given the current economic situation. In exchange, the graduates will provide the Government with additional manpower and expertise, bolstering our existing teams and service levels.

Mister Speaker, the end goal as it pertains to this initiative is for the Civil Service, as far as possible, to retain those Caymanian graduates who prove to be high performers, by transitioning them to full-time employment. Where this occurs, it will be an advantageous outcome for young Caymanians.

Mister Speaker, the third and final positive message for today is around our annual employee engagement survey. Remarkably, despite this year's challenges, the Civil Service saw increases in both the response rate and the engagement score. This year, we achieved a **record response rate of 83%, which marks a 9% increase over 2019's**

response rate of 74%. Similarly, our overall **engagement score increased to 72%, which is 2% higher than last year's score.** While we have not yet received the full results of the survey, these preliminary results are extremely encouraging and indicate a step in the right direction. I would like to give a special mention to the RCIPS who increased their 2019 participation rate by 29%. In 2019 their participation rate was 55% and in 2020 their participation rate was 84%. Also Mr Speaker I am proud to report that 26 civil service entities achieved 100% participation rate.

Mister Speaker, as you are aware, the employee engagement score indicates the extent to which our employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization and put effort into their work. For this score to increase by 2% during this most trying year is an outstanding achievement and one for which we should all be proud of. In my view, this result indicates that the responsibilities placed on us as a Civil Service during COVID-19, namely the responsibility to keep the people of these beloved Islands safe, ignited passion within our

employees. The leadership exhibited, the joined up approach taken and ultimately the results achieved during our response to COVID-19 strengthened our employees' commitment to the Government. For the greater good Mister Speaker, our employees put tremendous effort into their work in 2020 and delivered life-saving results. All these things translated to increased engagement, which showed up on the employee engagement survey as a 2% increase in overall engagement. Mr Speaker I wish to record my thanks to Chief Officer McField-Nixon and her dynamic team in PoCS who lead our engagement survey project, they achieved world class results.

Mister Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank the elected Government for their continued support for the Civil Service. additionally, I wish to recognise the efforts of our Civil Servants, who continuously provide me with good news stories, like the three I shared today. It is because of their hard work, their ideas, their professionalism, their drive, their discipline that the Civil Service can continue on its journey toward becoming world-class and making the lives of those we serve better! Thank you Mr

Speaker.