



CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

2019 THRONE SPEECH

Delivered by
His Excellency the Governor, Martyn Roper OBE

November 2019 - Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly Building

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

It has been a little over a year since my wife, Lissie, and I arrived in these beautiful Islands. We have very much enjoyed getting to know you and are very grateful for the warm 'CaymanKind' welcome we have received.

It is an honour to join you today to outline the Government's plans for the financial years 2020 and 2021.

The budget reflects the agenda of the National Unity Government. It will fully comply with the public management and finance law and the principles. I pay tribute to the government's prudence and responsibility in managing the country's finances.

In 2020-2021 Government will continue to strengthen the economy and enhance the quality of life of Caymanians and all who live on these Islands.

Capital projects and the economy

Plans for the next two years include major investments in the road network, completion of the new John Gray High School and a new Sunrise Training Centre for adults with special needs. Work is also expected on the integrated solid waste management system, as well as the long term

residential mental health services facility which will allow patients to be treated on-Island for the first time.

The Ministry of District Administration, Aviation, Tourism and Transport also has plans to move forward two significant projects: the cruise berthing facility and enhanced cargo port, subject to the result of the referendum, as well as airside works at Owen Roberts International Airport. There will also be continued investment in the infrastructure of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. These projects seek to ensure that the Cayman Islands can support growing numbers of tourist arrivals in the near future, and consolidate the sector's contributions to the economy and jobs.

While tourism is an established pillar of the economy, Government is well aware of the importance of diversification and will be looking to stimulate growth in other areas of the economy that promote sustainability, such as agriculture.

A national food safety and security policy and strategy is expected during the coming budget period that will include proposals to increase local agricultural production and enhance opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Infrastructure

As Government grows the economy, agencies within the Ministry of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure, will work to provide a strong strategic and technical foundation focused on building local capacity.

The Planning Department will continue work to update the current development plan and Public Works Department will double the size of its already highly successful apprenticeship programme.

Building local capacity

Another agency that delivers targeted training services to develop our local talent pool is Workforce Opportunities & Residency Cayman. In 2020-2021 the agency known as WORC will introduce online services that facilitate the advertising of vacancies, as well assorted application and administrative processes.

Education

A key goal for Government is to provide the best educational opportunities for Caymanians of all ages, and abilities, including vocational and technical training. Government will work to implement the new primary school curriculum

and the Ministry of Education has planned new and enhanced programmes to target young learners, mature students and those with special needs.

To enhance the quality of education services the Office of Education Standards will increase its inspection programme over the next two years.

Stronger communities

In addition to meeting the educational needs of young people Government is also committed to supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

This includes children but also older people and families in need.

Many initiatives are underway to promote this objective including a residential facility for children in care, and the revision of legislation that touches on adoption and child welfare among other topics.

To support older persons Government will work to lower their cost of living.

Reducing crime

Of course a sense of physical security is also central to well-being and quality of life. Overall crime is down by 15% year on year but there is no room for complacency. I strongly support our excellent Police Commissioner's modernization programme for RCIPS.

As announced, in early December, the RCIPS will add a second Airbus H145 helicopter to its fleet in early December to support border security, operate rescue and medevac services within the Islands, as well as provide local and regional disaster response, and aerial support to the Coast Guard.

The police will also work to prioritise investigations related to child abuse and domestic violence through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

An early and important initiative for the Coast Guard will be the establishment of an Operations and Rescue Coordination Centre.

Like the Coast Guard, Customs & Border Control (CBC) protects our borders, with a particular focus on ports and airports. A key initiative for CBC in the coming year will be the introduction of automatic border control solutions at Owen Roberts International Airport.

Similarly the Ministry of Home Affairs, which is responsible for five public safety agencies, will continue investing in technology, while working to leverage inter-agency collaboration across the public and private sectors, as it strives to best serve the interest of public safety.

The National Security Council, which provides input and overarching guidance to all agencies tasked with crime, safety and security matters, will continue to meet regularly and to tackle a host of challenges, including marine safety, road safety, border security and cybersecurity. An updated threat assessment will enable the preparation of a new crime reduction strategy.

The fight against crime will also include the implementation of a National Anti-Gang Strategy and Plan and a National Child Safeguarding Plan. Both initiatives will be the work of teams from across Government.

Work will progress on setting up a Cayman Defence Regiment to bolster security and reinforce humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) capability in the Cayman Islands as well as the other Overseas Territories and across the region. A team from the Ministry of Defence will arrive next week.

Fighting international crime

Given the Cayman Islands status as a global financial services centre the fight to keep the jurisdiction free of international financial crime and maintain our strong reputation is of central importance. Adopting international best practice keeping fully in line with increasing global regulation and recent international assessments, such as the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and the EU, play an important role. The Ministry of Financial Services has also planned increased engagement with international stakeholders to address misconceptions about the jurisdiction.

Civil Service embracing planning, technology, and evidence based analysis

To help the Government achieve its objectives, public service agencies will work to develop their capacity to deliver effective and efficient programmes and services that meet the needs of Caymanians and residents. Civil servants will focus on innovation and using evidence based analysis in their decision making.

The Treasury Department, e-Government unit and Postal Service plan to introduce more online services including online banking for Government agencies, stronger security and mobile apps.

The Economics and Statistics Office is set to conduct the 2020 population and housing census late next year, and will use findings to inform policy and decision making in the public sector and business.

Our exceptionally able Deputy Governor will continue to promote a world class civil service, working on the goals of the Civil Service Five Year Strategic Plan of developing leaders and talent, improving customer service standards, and developing a strong communications service.

My office will continue to give strong support to our independent Commissions and officers, who do excellent work to underpin our good governance, including our highly respected judiciary who do so much to support our security and prosperity.

The UK/Cayman relationship is strong based on partnership and mutual respect. A highly successful visit by TRHs The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall and 2 Ministerial visits underlined our enduring bonds. We have had constructive discussions on a good and sensible package of constitutional changes to modernize and update our relationship. I hope these can soon be concluded.

I have commented separately on yesterday's Appeal of the Judgment on same sex marriage. It is my firm belief that the Government should act with reasonable haste to comply with the Court's directions. As Governor, and Representative of Her Majesty the Queen, it is my strong wish that, despite strong beliefs and opinions, everyone in this Honourable House treats everyone with courtesy, dignity and respect.

Conclusion

I would like to end by thanking all members of the House for warmly welcoming my wife and I to these Islands, and for their role in creating a constructive working environment to help serve this territory.

Over the last year I have been greatly impressed by the Cayman Islands, its government, Civil Service and its people and I am proud to be your Governor. I am also grateful to all those who have worked alongside me (including the excellent staff in my office) towards our shared goal of ensuring that the Cayman Islands enjoy governance and administration that is worthy of its people. I will continue to do my utmost to support the prosperity and security of the Islands, not least at a time of change and

uncertainty as the UK Government holds an election on 12th December and navigates a complicated exit from the European Union.

Let me make special mention of the Ministry of Finance, and all other staff, who have worked tirelessly for months to ensure these budget meetings are a success.

Like you I am excited to see what is next for these islands. I am confident about the future and I look forward to working with you to ensure that Caymanians, and our residents on Island, enjoy enhanced security and prosperity.

Thank you and may God bless the Cayman Islands.