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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan. December 2, 2020. 5:15 p.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met remotely in regular session on Tuesday, December 1, 2020.

- Cabinet decided to launch a full investigation into the “sell-off” of government assets by the previous administration. The inquiry will include representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General’s Ministry, the Ministry of the Public Service and representatives from the Public Service Union and the private sector.
- In accordance with its commitment to full transparency, Cabinet decided to authorize a forensic audit of Belize Infrastructure Limited, including all projects it administered.
- Hon. Julius Espat, Minister of Infrastructure Development and Housing, updated the Cabinet on the current state of the nation’s roads, bridges and culverts and the need for emergency repairs and restoration. In this regard, Cabinet approved additional funding of BZ\$9 million for road works especially on the major roads and highways severely impacted by the recent rains and floods.
- The Attorney General, Hon. Magali Marin-Young, presented a proposal to amend the legislation to impose time limits for the delivery of judgments in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. The Hon. Attorney General informed Cabinet that she had consulted the President of the Court of Appeal, the Acting Chief Justice and the Belize Bar Association before presenting the proposal. Cabinet decided that the legislation would not come into effect immediately and

agreed to approve an increase in the allocation for the Judiciary in next year's budget.

- Cabinet also discussed important amendments to the Contractor General Act including proposals to introduce an independent Public Contracts Commission to review and approve the award of public contracts and to work along with the Contractor General to investigate any suspicious public contracts.
- The Hon. Michel Chebat, Minister of Health and Wellness, updated Cabinet on the current effects of the pandemic and measures recently implemented. Minister Chebat informed Cabinet that a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture for the use of the laboratory at the Belize Agricultural Health Authority for COVID-19 PCR testing. This will scale up the capacity for PCR testing.

The Minister also indicated that the Ministry of Health and Wellness will be doubling the lab staff to decrease the turnaround time for results.

- The Hon. Orlando Habet, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, updated the Cabinet on NEMO's ongoing assistance as a result of the impact of the rains associated with Hurricanes ETA and IOTA. The Minister informed Cabinet that assistance for food, household appliances and other supplies were being provided to more than 2,800 Belizeans. Cabinet requested the production of an updated map of flood-prone areas by NEMO. The deadline for completion is before the start of the 2021 Hurricane Season.

Ends