



PR#491

## PRESS RELEASE

### Cabinet Brief

*Belmopan. 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021. 5:25 p.m.*

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

- Cabinet met with a few members of the COVID-19 Health Advisory Task Force for an update on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic and to make recommendations for the coming months. The group of medical doctors advised Cabinet that while progress was being made in terms of the number of persons vaccinated, the public must continue to take all precautions since this third wave has not yet peaked. In addition, the team of doctors presented a series of recommendations, for Cabinet's consideration, to aid in preventing the spread of COVID-19. These recommendations would cover the period from October to December 2021 and will be announced shortly by the Ministry of Health & Wellness.
- In an effort to better control the outbreak of COVID-19, Cabinet approved the establishment of a COVID-19 Enforcement Unit within the Ministry of Health & Wellness to oversee responsibilities for the maintenance of supervision and enforcement of COVID-19 protocols in all businesses and other establishments.
- Cabinet was updated on the status of vaccinations and the number of vaccines available in Belize. As of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021, 198,580 persons or 48 percent had received at least one dose of the vaccine and 139,157 persons or 34 percent have been fully vaccinated.
- Cabinet approved a three-pronged approach to crime prevention that is centered on social development, change behavior and violence interrupter components complemented by evidence-based policing presented by the ministries of Home Affairs, Youth and Human Development.
- Cabinet gave its approval for Belize to accede to the Madrid Protocol for the international registration of marks administered by the World Intellectual Property Organization and for the implementation of the Madrid Protocol into the domestic legal framework and for the Belize Intellectual Property Office personnel to be trained in preparation of the full implementation of this Protocol (BELIPO). This will require a review and amendment to the existing Trademark legislation and training of personnel at BELIPO.
- Cabinet approved an initiative by the Ministry of Youth, Sports & E-Governance to provide for youth mainstreaming in Belize. Youth

mainstreaming is a strategy which provides young people with opportunities to partake in skills training and other important roles as a means of becoming involved in the leadership of society in the future. Many young people need training in areas that cannot be provided by the private sector of our society but which can be provided by government departments such as Fisheries, Health, Mining and Geology so that they can gain experience or become interested in the future with the aim that they will be the leaders in those areas as well as mainstream society.

- Cabinet gave its approval for Amendment to the Customs and Excise Tariff Introduction of Phase 8 of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) Trade Agreement with the European Union (EU) and approved legislation for the implementation of this phase of the EPA which will result in the removal of import duties from goods from EU countries.
- The Ministry responsible for New Growth Industries was given approval to form a working group to facilitate the development of a National Cohune Industry. This working group will comprise stakeholders and representatives from the ministries of Energy, Economic Development, Trade, Local Government, Immigration, Sustainable Development and New Growth Industries and has been tasked with coordinating and supporting initial investment and incentive requests of the cohune industry.
- In partial fulfilment of its Plan Belize Manifesto promise to make it easy and transparent to conduct business in Belize by eliminating meaningless and excessive bureaucracy and to modernize systems and processes for greater efficiency, Cabinet gave its approval for an addendum to the 2010 Temporary Employment Permit Policy to allow for the processing of applications for temporary employment permits in a more expeditious manner.
- Finally, Cabinet strongly urges the public to wear masks, maintain physical distance and wash hands regularly. For those not fully vaccinated, get vaccinated as soon as possible. Vaccinations save lives.

**Ends**