



PR#338

## PRESS RELEASE

### Cabinet Brief

*Belmopan. 17<sup>th</sup> June 2021. 7:05 p.m.*

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

- Cabinet received a report on the Prime Minister's first official visit to Guatemala, where discussions were held on trade, security cooperation, migration, support for the Organization of American State's Office in the Adjacency Zone and the improvement of bilateral relations through the work of the Joint Commission. In addition, the Prime Minister met with the Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce and Industry where he welcomed private investments to Belize. The Prime Minister also met with Belizeans studying in Guatemala.
- Hon. Eamon Courtenay, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration, briefed Cabinet on recent actions taken by the Government of Nicaragua against important opposition leaders. Belize has issued a statement along with Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Spain, reminding the Government of Nicaragua that actions against important opposition leaders threaten the free exercise of democracy.
- In reference to the standardization of working hours for the Public Service as a part of government's undertaking with the unions on the reduction of working hours, Cabinet decided on the opening hours for government offices to the public. The new hours of operation are 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. from Monday to Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday, and as an exception, may include rotation schedules if deemed necessary or other alternative work arrangements outside of indicated hours.

- Cabinet applauded the report from the Ministry of Agriculture that the 2021 vegetable crop was one of the most successful in recent years. This year's crop was completely sold out and farmers welcomed the ministry's intervention in controlling imports. This is in line with government's farm-to-table initiative to promote eating what you grow and growing what you eat, as outlined in *Plan Belize*.
- Cabinet endorsed a pilot project from the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing to provide housing for the most vulnerable Belizeans and to construct a small number of low-income houses per district this fiscal year. This is in keeping with *Plan Belize*, which seeks to provide citizen accessibility to adequate, affordable, quality housing.
- Cabinet approved a request by the Ministry of Health & Wellness to increase efficiency of revenue collection at government-run hospitals by standardizing fees across the public health facilities and implementing a social program for low-income earners and the indigent population.

Additionally, Cabinet approved the promotion of 37 essential nurse specialists in all categories and welcomed the initiative by the ministry to grant 50 Scholarships for persons wishing to study nursing.

- Cabinet endorsed the National Trade Facilitation Implementation Roadmap to improve the technical capacity of the government in identifying important measures to reform Belize's performance and improve the competitiveness of our industries.
- Cabinet welcomed the report from the Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations that cruise tourism will return to Belize with the first port of call on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2021. In this regard, Cabinet appointed a ministerial subcommittee comprised of the Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations and the Ministry of Health & Wellness to develop a set of COVID-19 protocols to ensure safe entry of cruise tourists to Belize.

**Ends**