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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan, 4th August 2022. 11:25 a.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 2nd August 2022.

After deliberating on the results of the meeting of 19th July 2022, and the letter from the churches dated 25th July 2022 addressed to the Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Cordel Hyde on the matter of the holding of a referendum on the proposal to issue licenses for the sale and use of marijuana in Belize, the church leaders, on behalf of the petitioners and the Government of Belize, requested that the Governor General defer the issuing of the Writ of Referendum until a date to be determined. In addition, Cabinet supported the recommendation to issue a joint statement from the government and churches on the matter.

The Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries updated Cabinet on the investigation into the tragic incident at a Hopkins nightclub, which resulted in the death of two persons and another eight injured. The minister informed Cabinet that three persons were in custody. He assured Cabinet that police investigations will be thorough and that no effort will be spared to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and E-Governance, with the assistance of the European Union, has embarked on a consultation process for the development of a National Energy Plan, which will create a path to energy independence through the increased use of sustainable renewable sources of energy.

Cabinet discussed the National Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprise (MSME) Policy and Strategy for 2022-2025 presented by the Ministry of Investment. The new policy and strategy were approved along with several key recommendations, carving a roadmap with significant contributions to the efforts that have been undertaken to strengthen the MSME ecosystem in Belize. This national effort towards MSME resilience and sustainability compliments the recent strategy to increase the call to support local businesses by buying locally produced goods and services. This support is crucial, given MSME's contributions to economic development, through job creation, strengthening communities, and increased contributions to gross domestic product (GDP). In Belize, MSMEs are responsible for approximately 70 percent of national employment and close to 50 percent of the country's GDP.

Cabinet's commitment to focusing on leading the sustained growth and prosperity of all Belizeans, through inclusion and partnership, is highlighted in these initiatives. Through the national initiatives to support MSMEs across Belize, there will be the implementation of the National MSME Roadshow between August to November 2022 which will include the following pillars: capacity building, access to finance, policy, and legislation, msme formalization, and market access.

Cabinet also endorsed the first-ever MSME National Roadshow, which will be launched on Friday, 5th August 2022 at 10:00 a.m. at the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel in Belize City. The National Roadshow, spanning approximately four months, will take the services to all district towns and major tourist destinations. This major endeavour will allow MSMEs countrywide to access important services very close to home, ensuring that micro, small and medium-sized businesses have the opportunity to get business-ready or grow their businesses to the next level.

Cabinet was provided with a written update on the status of COVID vaccinations. Currently, there are 219,950 vaccines on hand. As of 29th July 2022, 227,851 persons or 53.0 percent had received at least one dose of the vaccine and 218,203 or 50.8 percent have been fully vaccinated. Of the population ages 12 to 17 years, 26,723 or 45.8 percent have received two doses of the vaccines and of the population 5 to 11 years, 5,825 or 8.0 percent of have received two doses. To date, 49,964 booster shots have been issued.

Finally, Cabinet congratulated the Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations and the Belize Tourism Board for successfully hosting the International Food and Music Festival, held in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, from 30th to 31st July.

Ends