



PR#137-25

PRESS RELEASE

GOB Clarifies False and Misleading Information Posted by Hot Off the Press

Belmopan, August 5, 2025.

It has come to the Government's attention that false and misleading information contained in an online article entitled "Chris vs. Cordel: A Battle Over Land and Values" was posted by an unreliable outfit named Hot Off the Press.

Contrary to the misinformation set forth in the post, Cabinet, on the 1st day of April 2025, duly approved the transition of land tax collection and enforcement from the Lands and Surveys Department to the Belize Tax Services Department (BTS). This Cabinet decision was communicated to the general public by Cabinet Brief PR#038-25 released on 3rd April 2025, which stated, "With a view to enhance land tax collection and enforcement, Cabinet gave its approval for the transfer of responsibility for Land Tax collection to the Belize Tax Service (BTS) through a phased one year transition process involving inter-agency coordination between the BTS, Lands Department, and other relevant authorities and the use of the online IRIS platform for assessment, billing, and collection thereof."

This transition aligns with the Government's broader tax reform strategy of centralized and digitized tax administration to enhance compliance, efficiency, and revenue collection. This approach also reflects international best practice, which advocates for consolidating tax collection functions within a single agency to improve efficiency, compliance, and overall tax performance.

The Government, on average, collects roughly \$7 million per annum in land taxes. Technical analysis indicates that this roughly represents a fifteen percent compliance rate, leaving almost \$40 million uncollected from landowners every year. It is expected that the transition of collection and enforcement to BTS could substantially improve the compliance rate on land taxes, thereby providing much-needed financial resources to progress the Government's Plan Belize 2.0 agenda, particularly in areas of education, health, citizen security, and infrastructure.

The transition is being implemented in a phased approach, starting with inter-agency agreements and legal amendments. It will include comprehensive data cleansing, matching landowner and property data with BTS's TIN registry, followed by secure data migration to the Integrated Revenue Information System (IRIS) platform. Subsequent phases will involve IRIS module development, system testing, stakeholder consultations, and a robust public information campaign.

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