

Throne Speech 2007

Delivered by His Excellency the Governor Mr. Stuart Jack, CVO on 27 April 2007

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Introduction

Madame Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly,

We can look forward to the next financial year with considerable confidence, though we cannot afford to be complacent about the many challenges that we will doubtless face.

Perhaps the biggest challenge will be to think about the implications for the Cayman Islands of major worldwide and regional developments.

Globalisation means the easier flow of people, money and work between countries. It represents both an opportunity and a challenge for Cayman. The Cayman Islands are major beneficiaries of globalisation. It is the basis of our two main industries, tourism and finance. But with these opportunities come potential problems. To remain a beneficiary of globalisation and yet be able to address its challenges, we need to understand the way globalisation works, to plan for contingencies, to be flexible and ready to move quickly. This could affect many areas of government such as economic policy, education (which is vital if we are to keep up with globalisation), international relations, security, immigration policy and even health.

A second major challenge is climate change. There is an undeniable global consensus that climate change is happening, caused by human activities. We must now start addressing its implications for us, including in our planning and building regulations as well as in our disaster preparedness. The consequences of not doing so could be dire, especially for islands such as ours.

Third, we must have an eye to developments in neighbouring countries that might create either problems for us -- such as in crime or migration, or opportunities for collaboration.

In facing these three challenges and others, we can draw on the many strengths of these islands.

Our economy is strong. Although inevitably changing, our society remains strong, as do the values on which it is based, including Christian values, democratic and accountable government, and respect for human rights.

Ties with the United Kingdom and with the Royal Family also remain strong, as demonstrated during the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Edward. As we review the constitutional relationship with Britain over the coming months, I hope that the people of these islands will actively take part in the public consultation process that the Government and political parties will be leading.

As for the areas for which I as Governor am responsible and the personal priorities that I set out on my arrival, I am confident that we will make further progress over the next year, building on the achievements of the recent past. That applies to law and order. We will continue to strengthen the police and the criminal justice system and to clamp down on crime. Our main focuses will include how we can prevent young people turning to crime, how we can reduce recidivism on the part of convicted criminals, how we can reduce the death toll on our roads, and how we can make the sea around our coasts safer and more secure. Serious work in all these areas is already in hand.

An especially encouraging feature of this work has been – and as far as I am concerned will continue to be – a team effort among all relevant parts of government and beyond.

The same goes for another of my priorities: disaster preparedness. As the new agency, Hazard Management Cayman Islands, builds up its capability over the coming year, we will be able not only to improve further the very good hurricane plans we already have but also to do the same for a wider range of hazards or possible disasters. In doing so we will want both a joined up effort across government and closer cooperation with the private and voluntary sectors.

We will also be working to improve the efficiency of the Civil Service and its responsiveness to the needs of Government and the wider community. Our aim will be a better trained, better managed Civil Service that provides an improved service to its customers whether they be Ministers or members of the public.

One very promising development will be the new Civil Service College that the Honorable Chief Secretary and the Portfolio of the Civil Service are establishing in partnership with the University College of the Cayman Islands. I am setting up an award for excellent customer service by civil servants, and will in due course be inviting nominations from the public.

Beginning with the Judicial Branch of Government, I now turn my focus to the plans of various Ministries, Portfolios and Departments.

Judicial Administration

During the next fiscal year, several operational and logistical improvements are set to enhance efficiency for the Judicial Administration and Judiciary.

A project committee is overseeing architectural aspects of the much-anticipated Summary Court Building, for which ground breaking is scheduled by the end of this year. A Commercial Division of the Grand Court is likewise being initiated, to deal with complex cases arising from local and international business and trust disputes, and a Drug Treatment Court will become operational within the next two months.

Legislative Assembly

In conjunction with its progression as an independent branch of government, the Legislative Assembly is continuing its modernization with a review of Standing Orders (2006 Revision). A website for Parliament is expected to be launched this August.

The Audit Office

For the 2007/08 fiscal year, the Auditor General plans three new value-for-money audits, to focus on construction projects, customs waivers and duties, and issues relevant to Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. In addition, the Audit Office will complete work on project management within government.

The Cabinet Office

The Cabinet Office will continue to develop strategic services for government, while encouraging public participation via several newly established agencies.

Accordingly, the Protocol Office will focus on developing standards and policies in keeping with both international practices and local traditions, while the equally new Freedom of Information Unit will coordinate preparedness activities for public entities. An independent Information Commissioner will be vested with both investigatory and enforcement powers.

Also newly established, the Constitutional Review Secretariat's research on constitutional options is already underway. This will be followed by public consultation, eventually leading to a national referendum. Results will provide the mandate upon which government will negotiate with the United Kingdom to achieve a new and updated Cayman Islands Constitution.

In other areas, Computer Services will develop an e-government initiative to facilitate wider online public service delivery; Government Information Services will focus on strengthening its strategic approaches to public education and issues management, and the Temporary Housing Unit will monitor the relocation of temporary trailer homes to a secure holding site from which they may be readily re-deployed if needed.

The Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs

The Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs has been strengthened by additional staff and expanded accommodations. This is to support the Portfolio's 2007/08 thrust towards enhancing public safety in a range of areas.

For the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, strategic priorities for 2007/08 will focus on further lowering serious crime, reducing road traffic casualties and increasing detection rates. National security will also be enhanced by improving prisoner education and rehabilitation programmes and introducing "best practice" legislation.

The National Hazard Management Plan will define priorities for hazard management planning and enhance coordination of disaster mitigation and management programmes. 9-1-1 Emergency Communications will also strengthen disaster and major incident preparedness, while assuming a new responsibility -- electronic monitoring -- under the Government's anticipated alternative sentencing programme. Immigration services will be strengthened in terms of measures to detect and prosecute those who fail to observe immigration laws and regulations.

The achievement of these goals will require appropriate human resource capabilities and practices, development of physical infrastructure, and the acquisition of specialist equipment. These will include:

- Additional sea-going vessels, permitting more effective policing of Cayman's borders, as well as a new Marine and Drugs Task Force Building.
- Construction of a Bodden Town Emergency Centre, to incorporate Fire, Police and Paramedic Services. Facilities and equipment will also be expanded on Cayman Brac.
- Completion of designs for a purpose-built Emergency Operations Centre (EOC);
- Construction of a new National Archive facility, completion of which is expected to coincide with the start of the 2009 hurricane season; and,
- In the area of immigration, acquisition of technology to detect false documents and read biometric data.

The Portfolio of the Civil Service

Previously a provider of traditional human resource services, the Portfolio of the Civil Service now serves as government's strategic advisor on HR matters.

In this new capacity, the Portfolio will in 2007/8 continue restructuring as it focuses on developing audit programmes, promoting and facilitating effective HR practices, supporting the decentralization of human resource aspects of government's financial management database, and expanding activities undertaken by its Strategic HR Unit.

A major undertaking for the Portfolio is the launch of the Civil Service College which will be ready for course participants this September.

The Portfolio of Legal Affairs

In its continuing effort to remain attuned to community needs, the Portfolio of Legal Affairs will focus on expanding current services.

The Legislative Drafting Department will add staff experienced in the area of financial services legislation and the year's legislative programme will include a new Proceeds of Criminal Conduct Law and amendments to the Police Law. Work will continue on assisting with the practical aspects of introducing alternative sentencing legislation and establishing the Drug Court.

Plans for the Law School include the introduction of a master's programme in international finance. The Attorney General's Chambers will appoint dedicated in-house attorneys to cover emerging Human Rights issues, and — with the aim of improving crime-detection — mid-2007 will also see the formal opening of expanded forensic services, to include DNA testing.

The Law Reform Commission will complete work on the Corporate Insolvency Review, the Residential Tenancies Bill and the Legal Practitioners Bill. The commission further anticipates drafting a Legal Aid Bill, anti-corruption legislation and a Charities Bill.

The Portfolio of Finance & Economics

During the 2007/08 financial year, the Portfolio of Finance & Economics will again provide government with financial and economic and accounting services and advice, while supporting the financial services sector and improving Cayman's business environment.

Key internal goals include independent evaluations of departments' management systems; automation of the management of containerized cargo, and sourcing of a new IT system to support enhanced pensions administration.

In delivering services to local and international business, the Portfolio will upgrade the General Registry's online system, enabling electronic fee submissions, and will also expand online payment capability for the shipping sector. This comes in the wake of Maritime Authority plans to establish and expand shipping services in Asia, Fort Lauderdale, France, London and Singapore, and to seek associate members status within the International Maritime Organization.

The Portfolio will also continue efforts to position Cayman as a leading international business centre, undertaking several 2007/8 scheduled key policy and legislative activities. These will include the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority's actions based on assessment and impact studies of various international requirements. At home, the Authority will issue new and updated policies, procedures and guidance notes.

The Ministry of District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing

Activities for the Ministry of District Administration, Planning, Agriculture and Housing will, in 2007/8, set the stage for a higher standard of development for Cayman's people. This will be achieved by promoting a more comprehensive approach to planning and through delivering policies and services that support positive economic growth.

Directly related initiatives will include the tabling of an updated Development Plan for Grand Cayman. The Planning Department will also implement the Builders Bill, designed to protect both homeowners and construction personnel, while the National Housing Development Trust will continue to focus on the provision of affordable housing for low-income Caymanians.

Capital projects will include the largest government project thus far—the new government office building, scheduled for completion in 2009. Slated for construction is a new, state-of-the-art civic centre for the district of Bodden Town which will serve as a Category A hurricane shelter. Also scheduled are construction of a new, custom-built Mosquito Research and Control Unit's hangar on Grand Cayman and an MRCU building on Cayman Brac.

Agriculture Department staff will develop plans for a new strategic direction, to include an agri-tourism complex in Lower Valley and strengthening of agricultural production as well as research, programme development and marketing.

Disaster mitigation will continue to receive attention: tanks for storing emergency fuel will be located in the eastern districts, new storm modelling software will be introduced, and regionally networked seismic monitoring stations will be located throughout the three islands.

The Ministry of Health and Human Services

The Ministry of Health and Human Services will continue to be guided by the broad strategic goal of ensuring a healthy resident population through the development of appropriate policies, legislation and access to a wide range of services.

Priorities in the area of human services will include:

- Services that contribute to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals, including the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women;
- Policy formation, utilizing data from the report on the National Assessment of Living Conditions. This will affirm the further research required for an in-depth understanding of our social strengths and weaknesses;
- Reinstatement of a Community Development Unit, with Community Officers in each district; and
- Development of a National Plan for the elderly.

Major initiatives and legislative reform addressing needs of children and youth will include a Policy Framework for Children and Youth and a National Child Protection Strategy. Both the Children Law and Regulations and Adoption Law will be revised, in keeping with the requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry will continue its support of alternative sentencing and drug rehabilitation court initiatives, in particular with the provision of treatment and probation services.

In the area of Health Services, the Ministry will seek to:

- evaluate, update and implement the National Anti-drug Strategy;

- implement in January 2008 a new model for healthcare delivery that will:
- establish a Public Health Department under central government;
- implement a new governance model, with a consistent management structure for the Health Services Authority; and
- implement a national strategy to promote wellness.

The Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports & Culture

In the 2007/8 fiscal year, the Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports and Culture will continue with its wide-ranging reform of education services, while implementing outcomes from reviews of the Pensions, Labour and Sports departments. Among broad aims supporting these initiatives will be the adoption of an integrated approach to management and engaging stakeholders in developing national policies.

Key objectives include rebuilding the George Town Primary School and constructing three new high schools, around which “learning communities” will be designed. Similar models will be developed for Cayman Brac. The review of the National Curriculum will be completed and new legislation will be drafted.

Sports will benefit from the establishment of the first national legislative framework for its oversight and Finally under this Ministry, a secretariat will be established to support the Human Rights Committee and its work, which has steadily grown as a direct result of the committee’s strong public awareness thrust.

The Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure

Environmental issues, road networks and improved efficiency will be the year’s focus for the Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure.

Key strategies for achieving these broad goals will involve flood mitigation in vulnerable areas; the development and management of recreation areas, and expansion of the Postal Service. The agenda will also include implementation of road-safety and traffic-management measures and decentralization of the Department of Vehicle and Drivers’ Licensing.

With these goals in mind, the Ministry will oversee an investigation into reducing, re-using and recycling landfill waste and will monitor the reorganization of landfills in Grand Cayman and Little Cayman. A review of the Public Health Law, with emphasis on updating environmental health and solid waste

measures, is also scheduled. The Postal Service will add 2,000 new postal boxes and Internet-based services, and a new post office is slated for Savannah.

Anticipated policy measures will entail creating, in conjunction with the community and special interests, a law to regulate unsolicited electronic messages (“spam”), as well as regulations to support amateur radio operations. “Graduated” licensing for young drivers is anticipated and traffic legislation will be revised to accommodate provisions for the handicapped.

Other important objectives are: concluding licensing negotiations with Caribbean Utilities and updating the Electricity Law; new Radio Cayman programming, focusing on culture, history, business and industry; restructuring the Office of Telecommunications; and strengthening the Public Works Department’s consultancy services and accountability.

The Water Authority will advance its pipeline extension into North Side as well as along the Queen’s Highway, and construct a pumping facility and reverse-osmosis plant in North Side. The East End well-field and reservoir site will be upgraded. An extension to Cayman Brac’s piped water supply is also scheduled.

The Ministry of Tourism, Environment, Investment and Commerce

During 2007/08, this Ministry will work with its agencies to strengthen natural resources management while executing strategies to promote tourism and investment growth.

Outcomes will include implementing the five-year National Tourism Management Policy; introducing legislation governing Sunday music and dancing, public transport, and national conservation. These initiatives will all involve continued public and private collaboration, particularly in the tourism and commercial sectors.

In further support of commerce, there will be increased emphasis on improving workforce standards and on market research. Boatswain’s Beach will restructure its business plan to elevate the park’s profile, and Cayman Airways will continue implementation of its two-year “Turnaround Plan” aimed at enhancing efficiency and reducing the need for government funding.

The Cayman Islands Investment Bureau will place greater emphasis on encouraging the involvement of local professionals in entrepreneurship initiatives. The Cayman Islands Development Bank expects to acquire its own central office accommodations to better service client needs, reduce costs and increase its asset base.

The Cayman Islands Airports Authority will continue redeveloping the Owen Roberts Airport. Infrastructural work such as redesigning airport access roadways will be completed by December 2007, while Phase II will begin in January 2008; preparatory work will start on Little Cayman’s Airport. With

regard to sea ports, Cayman's Port Authority will improve cruise facilities in George Town and Spotts. The island's long-term competitiveness as a cruise destination will be strengthened with berthing facilities for four cruise ships.

While working to support and strengthen commerce, balancing progress with environmental protection will remain a critical focus of this Ministry. Accordingly, the Cayman Islands Environmental Project, promoting public/private partnership in support of improved environmental performance, will be jointly piloted by the departments of Tourism and the Environment. In addition, the Endangered Species (Trade and Transport) Law and other national conservation legislation will be enacted, and a National Sustainable Development Strategy and a National Biodiversity Action Plan developed.

Conclusion

Madame Speaker, Members of the Legislative Assembly,

As I conclude I would like to thank the many civil servants who have helped to formulate these plans and who will have the job of implementing them. A special word of thanks goes to the private citizens who play an important part as members of statutory boards and consultative groups.

I pray that God will guide your work in the Legislative Assembly and the work of all areas of government over the coming year and beyond; and that He will continue to watch over and protect these islands.