

# Throne Speech 2005

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*Delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Mr Bruce H Dinwiddy CMG on 10 October 2005.*

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## Introduction

Honourable Madam Speaker and Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, I am honoured to present to you my third Throne Speech, only a few weeks before my departure from these beautiful Islands later this month.

As you know, the Throne Speech has traditionally been delivered at the beginning of each calendar year. This timing was very appropriate when the Government's financial year was also a calendar year. But the move to a July-June financial year, and the introduction of a separate strategic phase of the budget cycle, has meant that the timing of the opening of the Legislative Assembly for the year has increasingly been out of step with the rest of the Government's management cycle.

I therefore welcome the move of the Throne Speech to the same day as the Budget. I know that this is perhaps a matter of accident rather than planning, but I hope that it will continue. The Budget is the Government's major policy statement each year and it is right and proper that it should accompany the Throne Speech. Together, these two statements comprehensively outline the Government's strategy and plan of action for the coming year.

In light of this new arrangement, my address this morning is somewhat different from the Throne Speeches of the past. The Budget Address from the Financial Secretary, and the presentation from the Leader of Government Business that accompanies it, will outline the Government's specific policy initiatives for the year. It is therefore unnecessary for me to do that as part of this speech. Instead I shall focus on the key policies and strategic priorities the Government has established for 2005/6.

But before I do that I would like to announce one other change. Today is the last day that a Governor will address this Honourable House in traditional Governor's uniform. In line with modern practice in other British Overseas Territories in the Caribbean, future Governors in Cayman will wear normal business attire, even on the most formal occasions

## **Key Policies and Strategies of the Government in 2005/6**

Madam Speaker and Honourable Members, the Government's strategic focus for 2005/6 was outlined in the Strategic Policy Statement tabled in this Honourable House a little under two months ago. That Statement outlined the eleven outcome goals that the Government will pursue both this year and over the following 3 years.

In 2005/6, the policies of the Government will be focused on all eleven outcomes but special priority will be given to five key areas.

The first is to continue the restoration of the Islands following Hurricane Ivan. Work in this area has many aspects and involves many agencies of government.

Amongst them in the first few months of the year is continuing assistance with the rebuilding of houses and replacement of furnishings through the District Assistance Committees and the Cayman Islands Development Bank.

A key focus of the Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure will be to ensure that all damaged communications links, roads, water lines and public buildings are repaired to pre-Ivan standards or better. Other activities in that Ministry will include further debris removal as well as ash removal. Another early objective will be to re-open negotiations with CUC aimed at reaching agreement with them on a new non-exclusive licence.

A further major activity within this priority is finalising the relocation of many government agencies whose premises were affected by the storm, allowing the restoration of full services to the public.

The second priority area for the Government for 2005/6 is law and order. The recent increase in violent crime is of great concern to the Government, as I am sure it is to all residents of these Islands. As part of its response to the current challenges, the Government has made a significant financial commitment to a policing plan developed by the RCIP Senior Command Team and the Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs. And a new Commissioner, recruited from the United Kingdom, will arrive in Cayman at the end of this week.

Other law and order related actions will also be pursued in 2005/6. These include the completion of the Judicial Administration's case management system, the expansion of behaviour modification and rehabilitation programmes at the Prison with a specific focus on gang and drug related criminal behaviour, improved immigration controls, and an expanded forensic service within the Portfolio of Legal Affairs which will include forensic examinations of DNA and ballistics material to improve the detection and prosecution of crime.

A range of legislative changes to improve the crime fighting and prosecution abilities of law and order agencies will also be pursued during the year. Together, these initiatives are designed to ensure that, with the support of the community, the Cayman Islands will continue to be a safe place in which to live, work and visit.

The third priority for the Government in 2005/6 is in the area of social services, particularly education, health and family-related services.

Last month the Government hosted the National Education Conference and a major focus for the Ministry of Education this year will be the implementation of the major findings from that conference. Major capital works for three new high schools and a replacement primary school in George Town will also begin.

In the health sector, the Government is committed to ensuring that a high quality and cost-effective healthcare service is available to all residents of the Cayman Islands. The major focus for the Health Services Authority in 2005/6 will be the continued expansion of the scope of services it offers while simultaneously achieving financial sustainability. The development of an integrated Public Health function is a further priority in this sector this year.

The fourth priority area is ongoing support for key economic sectors.

In tourism, a major focus will be the resumption of the implementation of the National Tourism Management Policy following its temporary interruption in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan. The Minister, Ministry and Department of Tourism will be actively working with the industry to restore the numbers of stay-over visitors to pre-Ivan levels. Everyone recognises that this is an extraordinary challenge but also that it is one that must be met in order to restore this pillar of our economy.

In support of these initiatives, the Cayman Islands Airport Authority will commence a major redevelopment of the terminal building at Owen Roberts International Airport. The new terminal will help to improve our tourism product by including jet-ways that will allow passengers to enplane and deplane directly from and to the terminal building.

In relation to financial services, the Portfolio of Finance and Economics will be pursuing a number of initiatives to ensure the continued competitiveness of the sector and the streamlining of business processes. These will include implementing recommendations from reviews on the domestic insurance industry and securing agreements for the promotion and protection of investments with various countries.

The fifth and final priority is the delivery of efficient and effective government services. Two important legislative measures – the Public Service Management Bill and the Public Authorities Bill – are planned for 2005/6. In addition a large number of initiatives to improve performance across a wide range of Government agencies are planned for the year.

A small sample of these include the distribution of special telephone devices to allow speech and hearing impaired persons to contact the 911 emergency centre, a reduction in the turnaround time for issuing new land parcel numbers by the Lands and Survey Department, on-line Customs clearance of imported goods, on-line renewal of drivers' licences, an internet-based facility to allow companies to reload postal meters, and the development of a General Registry website to allow, among other things, on-line credit card payment for registry services.

Structural initiatives planned within the civil service include the establishment of a Management Support Unit to work with Chief Officers to build up the management capabilities of their organizations, the establishment of a department within the Ministry of Communications, Works and Infrastructure to manage beaches and other recreational facilities, continuing the restructuring initiative within the Public Works Department, the strengthening of staffing and structures within the Portfolio of Internal and External Affairs, and the completion of the new MRCU operations building, laboratories and offices to improve that department's capabilities.

The policy and strategy priorities that I have outlined are, of course, not exhaustive. The Financial Secretary and Leader of Government Business will outline in their statements later today significant initiatives that are planned in other important areas, including environmental protection and supporting the development of the Sister Islands in a way that respects and preserves their natural beauty and unique character for the future.

## **Some Parting Reflections**

As this is the last occasion on which I shall address this Honourable House before completing my term as Governor, I would like to use this opportunity to reflect briefly on my time in Cayman and some of the challenges that I think might lie ahead.

Leaving the Cayman Islands will be a very poignant experience for Emma and myself. It has been an enormous privilege for me to serve as your Governor. We have greatly enjoyed our three and a half years here and particularly the personal warmth, friendship and generosity of so many Caymanians.

A few things stand out from our time, with of course Hurricane Ivan being the most obvious. As difficult as the storm and its aftermath were, the speed of the recovery and restoration of these Islands has been nothing short of astonishing. The fact that it has been achieved almost solely from our own resources is even more remarkable. It is a reflection of the great resilience that is part of the history and culture of Cayman. The generosity of individuals and companies alike in contributing to the National Recovery Fund – seen recently once again with the CITN Telethon – is an indication of the compassion and care that Caymanians, and indeed all residents, have for each other. The Fund is playing a vital role in helping the less advantaged recover from the effects of the Hurricane and it will need to continue to do so for some time to come.

I would also like to comment on two other areas of significant development during my tenure.

The first is public sector reform. When I arrived, the financial management reform process was in its infancy. Just a few short years later, the Honourable Financial Secretary will present to this Honourable House today the second full accruals and output budget. Once again this achievement is quite remarkable, a fact that I suspect is not widely recognised amongst the general public. The financial

reforms, and the new system of public sector management that they embrace, are already generating significantly improved information and with it improved decision-making within the wider government. Encouragingly, much of the potential of the reform is as yet untapped and achieving that potential is one of the great challenges for the public sector in the years ahead.

Of course, finances are only one aspect of good management and I am very pleased that the Bill to reform the Government's personnel management arrangements will be introduced during this session of the Legislative Assembly. The Government, like any other organisation, is made up of the people within it. It is vitally important to the health and success of the organisation that staff are happy, well motivated and appropriately rewarded.

The new personnel arrangements are a key element in the drive to develop a high performance culture in government. Achieving such a change is no easy task and will not happen overnight, but I am convinced that the future prosperity of the country depends on it. In this modern age with borderless economies, all countries, and particularly small ones like Cayman, must be properly efficient and use their resources to the best effect if they are to prosper in the global environment. The reforms of the last few years position the Cayman Islands well in this regard. But we cannot rest on our laurels. Reform is not a one-off activity. The quest for ever greater efficiency and effectiveness within the Government, and the country as a whole, will only get more pressing as time goes by.

The other matter I would like to touch on is the maturing relationship between the Cayman Islands and the United Kingdom.

I would be among the first to admit that there has been some rough weather in our voyage together during the past three and a half years. I shall not dwell today on the Eurobank debacle, or on the imposition of the European Savings Directive. Nor on the disappointment here that the UK Government, having provided valuable assistance in the first few weeks after Hurricane Ivan, did not contribute more to Cayman's longer-term recovery. Perhaps the European Union will do something to restore Europe's reputation here during the next few months if we succeed in obtaining some valuable support for the National Recovery Fund from the Commission's emergency assistance programme.

Meanwhile, I am glad that some significant progress has been made over the last three and a half years in Constitutional modernisation. We now have Constitutional recognition of the offices of Leader of Government Business and Leader of the Opposition; and a Cabinet supported by a Cabinet Office staffed to promote and provide better coordination of our government process.

There are still some major issues to be addressed and settled. But I believe we have laid the basis for some other long overdue changes. I am glad that both parties represented in this Assembly are keen and willing to see further modernisation. I hope that Constitutional talks with the UK Government can be resumed next year, and that a new Constitution can be agreed well before the next Elections.

There are many other facets to Cayman's relationship with the UK. The two countries have ties stretching back through many generations, indeed centuries. Looking ahead, I am sure there will continue to be bumps in the relationship from time to time. There will continue to need to be hard work, good faith and willingness on both sides. That is something we all have in common, and I believe that there will be a strong and enduring relationship between Cayman and the UK for many years to come.

Undoubtedly, the Islands will face other challenges in the future. But Cayman is a very special place. And I hope that the Government and people will take care to ensure that it remains so, with particular attention to preserving as far as possible the natural environment. For Cayman is a place of great beauty. It is also a place of great compassion, of great faithfulness, and of great resilience.

Emma and I shall watch with hope and great affection the progress of the Cayman Islands in the years to come. I am very confident that you can look forward to a successful and prosperous future, in which all residents live together happily and harmoniously as one people.

## **Conclusion**

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of the Legislative Assembly, As you prepare to debate the Budget for the 2005/6 financial year, I pray that Almighty God will continue to watch over, preserve and prosper these precious Islands, and all who live in them, during this year and in the longer future.