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Cayman Islands Government

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT, YOUTH, SPORTS
AND CULTURE**

Madam Speaker thank you for the opportunity to provide a statement in relation to the National Youth Policy 2011, which was launched at a press conference on Friday September 30th.

I would first like to provide a bit of historical background to the National Youth Policy 2011. It is an update on the previous National Youth Policy 2000, which served as the guide for youth programmes and policies over the past eleven years. I would like to thank the Deputy Premier, The Hon. Julianna O'Connor-Connolly, who developed and introduced this first youth policy for the Cayman Islands with the assistance of the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Caribbean Youth Centre in Guyana.

The National Youth Policy 2000 was an extensive and comprehensive document, and it has provided the impetus for many of the institutions which exist today in relation to youth development work. These include:

- the **National Youth Commission**, which is an advocacy body in relation to youth issues,
- the **Youth Services Unit** which leads initiatives such as the Youth Passport, the Youth flex Radio Show and the Cayman Islands Youth Assembly, and,
- the **Cayman Islands Youth Assembly**, a body of young people who research and develop position papers on matters of concern to them.

The first Youth Policy itself called for its periodic review, and when I took office I asked the National Youth Commission to take the lead in reviewing and updating the Policy.

Madam Speaker, I would like to stress that the National youth commission did not seek to re-invent the wheel. The process for the updating of the Policy involved administering a survey (National Youth Commission Student Survey- NYCSS) among youth to ascertain the current concerns and issues facing young people. The Commission also undertook a review of all available youth related studies, reports and other literature to identify the common threads among the previous studies. The results of the survey and the review were then presented to a gathering of 100 youth stakeholders from across the Cayman Islands, and against this background they were tasked with reviewing and revising the

goals of the National Youth Policy and developing objectives to achieve these updated goals.

Some of the studies reviewed include:

1. Eyes and Voices to the Future (Dreams Study/White 2008)
2. Committee of Inquiry into the Causes of Social Breakdown and Violence among Youth in the Cayman Islands (2001).
3. Report on Pre-disposing Factors to Criminality in the Cayman Islands (Forde, 2006)
4. The Parental Relationship as Perceived by the Arrested Adolescent in the Cayman Islands (White, 2007).
5. Study of the Family in Caymanian Society (Wint, 1997).
6. Risks and Vulnerabilities Facing Children in the Cayman Islands (Thompson, 2006)
7. Vision 2008 The Cayman Islands National Strategic Plan (1999).
8. National Children & Youth Symposium (Dilbert, L., Rose, S., Francis, J., & Whittaker, K.,(2007).
9. Cayman Islands National Youth Policy (NYP, 2000)

The National Youth Commission Survey showed that the top concerns of young people were as follows:

Crime & Violence	65.8 %
School related Issues (such as overcrowding, unsanitary surroundings, poor canteen meals, etc.)	46.6 %
Drugs & Substance Abuse	31.6 %
Economy & Cost of Living	26.4 %
Education System	24.2 %
Boredom	18.1 %
Environment	15.3 %
Government & Policies	14.0 %
Personal Development	13.9 %
Employment related issues	13.3 %

The result of the work led by the National Youth Commission was the updated National Youth Policy 2011, which can be found on my Ministry's website www.ministryofhealth.gov.ky . This updated policy is a guiding document for youth legislation, policy and regulation in the Cayman Islands, as it documents and illuminates the concerns of the young women and men of the Cayman Islands, and assesses what can be done to improve the current state of affairs. The Youth Policy also seeks to create, foster and sustain an evolving Caymanian culture, which embraces

emerging global thought while harnessing what is intrinsically Caymanian. It strives to create a dynamic culture which produces a vibrant youth who is socially and politically informed, and environmentally aware.

The overarching goal of this policy is to recognise the unique role which young people can play in the development of the Cayman Islands. It therefore seeks to create an enabling environment which will enhance young people's opportunities to become legitimate partners in the development process and social transformation.

The Policy makes its recommendations based around six broad thematic areas;

- Socio-cultural identity
- Education
- Employment and entrepreneurship
- Sustainability
- Collaboration
- Health and safety

Central to the delivery of the goals and objectives which have been accepted by the Cabinet is the need for the providers of

youth related services to collaborate for the more effective delivery of these services.

As such, my Ministry will be establishing an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth Affairs. This committee will be made up of Chief Officers of all Ministries and Portfolios who will ensure the collaboration of the departments and agencies under their remit, as well ensuring that agreed programmes are properly resourced and delivered in line with the goals and objectives of the Youth Policy.

Part of the work of the National Youth Commission has been the development of a number of actions steps, which have been recommended to achieve the stated goals and objectives. One of the first deliverables of the Inter-Ministerial Committee will be the review and finalisation of an action plan which will be developed by the National Youth Commission, and the subsequent implementation of the action plan.

This idea of joined-up thinking is already well underway. For example the National Drug Council, which falls under my Ministry, has developed a National Anti-Drug Strategy and they are now actively devising (in collaboration with the Education Ministry) a substance abuse curriculum for presentation in schools. Other

pro-active and collaborative efforts include the BEST programme, which is a multi-agency early-intervention programme for school students and Passport2Success for young jobseekers. The Ministry of Education has also launched the B-TEC training initiative and the Premier's Office is looking at creating an on-island hospitality training programme.

As for my Ministry, we are currently working with more than thirty youth organizations, groups and programmes. We have worked with the Ministry of Education to advertise these programmes in our schools and with additional funding from both Ministries we have increased the capacity of the groups which has allowed some 800 students to enroll in these programmes which are now running until 6:00 PM to minimize the amount of unsupervised time for school children.

The Government does not intend to be the sole provider of youth related services, and I must point out that even as I pledge the commitment of the government to address youth related issues as a matter of priority, effective social development will be dependent on the role that each and every one of us is willing to play in the lives of our young people.

So I encourage everyone to take a look at the revised goals and objectives in the National Youth Policy 2011 and see what role you can play in the lives of young people. You need not invent another programme. Take a look at the Youth services Directory which is put out by the Youth Services Unit and you will see some 100 youth related programmes listed there. Many of them are struggling to find volunteers.

The *National Youth Policy* (2011) is the product of careful research, extensive stakeholder meetings, and focused discussions which included the youth of the Cayman Islands and it is hoped that it will give renewed direction to all our youth services providers.

I would like to thank everyone who had a hand in developing this policy document – those who attended the National Youth Commission Stakeholder Conference including our long standing youth development partners, as well as everyone else who gave their input formally and informally. Special thanks to the National Youth Commission and the National Youth Policy Steering Committee who spearheaded the process.

Our youth is our future. As clichéd as that might sound, it is true and underscores the fact that our efforts here are not an option.

There are also no quick fixes, keeping our youth on track is a long-term commitment.

As I have noted before, two of the primary issues are collaboration and a lack of volunteers. I suggest to those in the business community who look very closely at the bottom line that the issue of youth development is very much tied to it. If we cannot develop young people who feel they have a stake in the economic development of the Cayman Islands, then they will have no vested interest in it. Therefore I encourage you to consider giving staff time-off to do more volunteering; sponsor a youth group or other community initiatives; develop an internship or apprenticeship programme and devise flex time to help single parents spend more time with their children. I myself will be recommending the same to Government so we can lead by example on this.

The second challenge goes to our non-governmental partners who provide youth services, especially the churches. Expand your community outreach programmes, go out into your communities, find out who the young people at risk are and get to know their families and invite them into your programmes. There has always been a close relationship between the Church and the Government in the Cayman Islands and the study of the Bible is a

very good foundation to teach life's lessons to young people, but I also encourage our youth workers to take advantage of specific skill training that is offered locally.

Enroll in the Youth Worker course at the University College of the Cayman Islands – a fantastic programme developed in tandem with the Commonwealth Youth Centre. Sign up for conflict resolution classes, or take part in a Darkness-to-Light course which teaches how to deal with domestic abuse. The opportunities are there, I encourage you to take them! If you are not sure what is available call our Ministry.

The final challenge goes to parents, family members and neighbours. Spend time with young people: Listen to their fears, doubts and dreams. Nothing can replace simply spending time with your children. As one of our foremost youth advocates, Miss Joyce Hylton, so aptly observed: “Now is the time for passing on values to the child, and this can only be done through dialogue”. And if you see a child in need, talk to an experienced person, be it a teacher, social worker or other government staff member. You might be surprised to learn how many resources are available to help our children.

Let us all join forces and keep investing in our young people – not

as problems to be solved, but as opportunities to be seized.

As a Government we will work collaboratively across Ministries and portfolios to implement the National Youth Policy 2011 and I look forward to partnering with the Private Sector, the Churches, Services Organisations, NGOs and other members of the public in delivering a better future for our current and future generations.

Thank you.

Hon. Mark Scotland
Minister of Health, Environment, Youth, Sports and Culture