

BELIZE

No. HR8/1/13

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 3rd September 2021

10:00 AM

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SUPPLEMENTARY (1)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

6. Papers.

No. HR32A/1/13 - Social Security Board – Actuarial Valuation of the Social Security Scheme (at 31 December 2020).

No. HR32B/1/13 - Social Security Board – Financial Statements for the Years Ended December 31, 2020 and 2019 and Independent Auditors' Report.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment)

No. HR32C/1/13 - Civil Works Contract Agreements for Haulover Bridge Replacement Project.

(The Honourable Minister of Infrastructure Development and Housing)

8. Questions to Ministers. (See Notice Paper Attached)

10. Statement by Ministers.

12. Introduction of Bills.

1. Court of Appeal (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill, 2021.

Bill for an Act to amend the Court of Appeal Act, Chapter 90 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011; to enlarge the time limits for appealing; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

2. **Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) (Amendment) Bill, 2021.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Summary Jurisdiction (Offences) Act, Chapter 98 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011; to increase the penalty for the offence of spreading or publishing false news; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology)

14. **Public Business.**

A. **Government Business**

I **MOTIONS** *(For Text of Motions see Notice Paper attached)*

1. Resolution Authorizing the Transfer of Carbon Rights and Credits to the Belize Maya Forest Trust Motion, 2021.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

2. Resolution Authorizing the Transfer of Carbon Rights and Credits to the Maya Forest Corridor Trust Motion, 2021.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

3. Reparatory Justice for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery in British Honduras Motion, 2021.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment)



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SUPPLEMENTARY (1)

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS

QUESTIONS

[For Oral Answer]

Notice given on 25th June 2021.

- *1. Will the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Member for Orange Walk Central, say when he will follow through on his promise to reconvene the bipartisan COVID-19 National Oversight Committee?

- *2. Will the Minister of Health and Wellness say why COVID-19 restrictions have not been lifted for those citizens who are fully vaccinated?

(The Honourable Member for Mesopotamia)

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SUPPLEMENTARY (1)

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS

MOTIONS

1. **Resolution Authorizing the Transfer of Carbon Rights and Credits to the Belize Maya Forest Trust Motion, 2021.**

Notice given on 31st August 2021.

WHEREAS, section 22 of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011, requires that the Government shall, before disposing of any public assets with an aggregate value of or above two million dollars, obtain the approval of the National Assembly, to be signified by resolution made in that behalf and published in the *Gazette*;

AND WHEREAS, by an Agreement made on the 19th day of October 2020, (the “Original Agreement”), between the Government of Belize and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the parties agreed to co-operate in promoting the long-term protection and conservation of the natural resources of Belize, and in particular, its natural ecosystems, including flora, fauna, forest and wildlife therein;

AND WHEREAS, to that end, the Government and TNC have agreed to co-operate in the implementation of a strategy and mutual undertaking of the parties, whereby TNC will finance the acquisition of certain lands (“Conservation Lands”) in Belize to be held upon trust by the Belize Maya Forest Trust (the “Trustee”), a not-for-profit company, for the benefit of the Government and people of Belize for the protection and conservation of their natural ecosystems, flora, fauna and wildlife in perpetuity and the Government undertook to grant TNC through the Trustee, certain stamp duty and land tax exemptions for a period of 50 years, licenses and all carbon rights and credits associated therewith and proceeds of sale in respect thereof regarding the said lands to be held in trust by the Trustee for the sole use and benefit of the conservation, protection and maintenance of the Conservation Lands;

AND WHEREAS, by virtue of an agreement supplemental to the Original Agreement made between the Government and TNC dated the 31st day of August 2021, (the “Supplemental Agreement”), TNC has agreed, among other things, that land taxes shall apply to the Conservation Lands and that, after certain acquisition costs, endowment costs and management costs are reimbursed, the Government shall have the exclusive right to determine the use and disposition of such excess

or surplus amount of proceeds of sale of the carbon rights and credits associated therewith;

AND WHEREAS, by virtue of the Constitution of Belize, carbon rights and credits associated therewith are vested in the Government of Belize and therefore constitute public assets;

AND WHEREAS, the carbon rights and credits associated therewith in connection with the Conservation Lands which the Government agreed to transfer to the Trustee pursuant to the Original Agreement, as amended by the Supplemental Agreement, has an aggregate value in excess of two million dollars;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House approves the Government of Belize to transfer to the Belize Maya Forest Trust the carbon rights and credits associated therewith in connection with the Conservation Lands for the sole use and benefit of the conservation, protection and maintenance of the Conservation Lands **PROVIDED THAT** after certain acquisition costs, endowment costs and management costs are reimbursed in accordance with the terms of the Original Agreement as amended by the Supplemental Agreement, the Government shall have the exclusive right to determine the use and disposition of such excess or surplus amount of proceeds of sale of the carbon rights and credits associated therewith.

Cabinet's recommendation to be signified.

2. **Resolution Authorizing the Transfer of Carbon Rights and Credits to the Maya Forest Corridor Trust Motion, 2021.**

Notice given on 31st August 2021.

WHEREAS, section 22 of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011, requires that the Government shall, before disposing of any public assets with an aggregate value of or above two million dollars, obtain the approval of the National Assembly, to be signified by resolution made in that behalf and published in the *Gazette*;

AND WHEREAS, by an Agreement made on the 19th day of October 2020, between the Government of Belize and Global Wildlife Conservation, (now called "Re: Wild") ("the Principal Agreement"), the parties agreed to co-operate in promoting the long-term protection and conservation of the natural resources of Belize and, in particular, its natural ecosystems, including flora, fauna, forest and wildlife therein;

AND WHEREAS, to that end, the Government and Global Wildlife Conservation, (now called "Re: Wild"), have agreed to co-operate in the implementation of a strategy and mutual undertaking of the parties, whereby Re: Wild will finance the acquisition of certain lands ("Conservation Lands") in Belize to be held upon trust by the Maya Forest Corridor Trust ("the Trustee"), a not-for-profit company, for the benefit of the Government and people of Belize for the protection and conservation of their natural ecosystems, flora, fauna and wildlife in perpetuity and the Government undertook to grant Re: Wild through the Trustee, certain stamp duty and land tax exemptions for a period of 50 years, licenses and all carbon rights and credits associated therewith and proceeds of sale in respect thereof regarding the said lands to be held in trust by the Trustee for the sole use and benefit of the conservation, protection and maintenance of the Conservation Lands;

AND WHEREAS, by virtue of an agreement supplemental to the Principal Agreement made between the Government and Re: Wild dated the 31st day of August 2021, (the “Supplemental Agreement”), Re: Wild has agreed, among other things, that land taxes shall apply to the Conservation Lands and that, after certain acquisition costs, endowment costs and management costs are reimbursed, the Government shall have the exclusive right to determine the use and disposition of such excess or surplus amount of proceeds of sale of the carbon rights and credits associated therewith;

AND WHEREAS, by virtue of the Constitution of Belize, carbon rights and credits associated therewith are vested in the Government of Belize and therefore constitute public assets;

AND WHEREAS, the carbon rights and credits associated therewith in connection with the Conservation Lands which the Government agreed to transfer to the Trustee pursuant to the Principal Agreement, as amended by the Supplemental Agreement, has an aggregate value in excess of two million dollars;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House approves the Government of Belize to transfer to the Maya Forest Corridor Trust the carbon rights and credits associated therewith in connection with the Conservation Lands for the sole use and benefit of the conservation, protection and maintenance of the Conservation Lands **PROVIDED THAT** after certain acquisition costs, endowment costs and management costs are reimbursed in accordance with the terms of the Principal Agreement, as amended by the Supplemental Agreement, the Government shall have the exclusive right to determine the use and disposition of such excess or surplus amount of proceeds of sale of the carbon rights and credits associated therewith.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

3. Reparatory Justice for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery in British Honduras Motion, 2021.

Notice given on 1st September 2021.

WHEREAS, the Thirty-Fourth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community held from 3rd to 6th July 2013, in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, mandated the establishment of a CARICOM REPARATIONS COMMISSION as well as national reparations committees to pursue reparatory justice for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery and Native Genocide in the Commonwealth Caribbean;

AND WHEREAS, the CARICOM REPARATIONS COMMISSION has devised a “Ten Point Plan for Slavery Reparations” which calls for, among other things, the research and preparation of claims setting out the moral, ethical and legal case for the making of reparations by the United Kingdom; and this House is aware that Jamaica is preparing to present a Petition to Her Majesty the Queen for the referral of this question to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in England;

AND WHEREAS, Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community recommitted themselves to the advancement of this issue at their Thirty-Second Intersessional Meeting held virtually on the 24th and 25th February 2021;

AND WHEREAS, a credible body of regional and international studies have been able to substantiate that profits from the British slave trade and slave labour contributed significantly to the accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution and, conversely, contributed to the underdevelopment of member states of the Caribbean Community;

AND WHEREAS, the United Nations Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, acknowledged that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery are crimes against humanity, and “have undeniably contributed to the poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion, economic disparities, instability and insecurity that affect many people in different parts of the world, in particular developing countries” and that Africans and people of African descent, Asians and indigenous people were victims of these acts and continue to be victims of their consequences;

AND WHEREAS, on 17th June 2020, at the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council Urgent Debate on current racially inspired human rights violations and systemic racism the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, called for amends to be made for centuries of violence and discrimination, including through formal apologies, truth-telling processes and reparations in various forms;

AND WHEREAS, the British Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, 1833, which abolished the slavery system and the British government paid £20 million (which today, by some convertors, would equate to about £70 billion) to the former slave owners as compensation for the loss of their human “chattels” but there were no reparations of any kind to the indigenous people and former slaves and their descendants;

AND WHEREAS, the European colonial powers that sanctioned the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery have refused to issue an apology and have shown a reluctance to engage in any meaningful discussion on reparations for their role in the slave trade and the enslavement of people of African descent;

AND WHEREAS, there is convincing legal research that shows, firstly, that the unauthorized removal and forced transportation of African people from Africa and their subsequent enslavement in Caribbean countries, including Belize, were against the fundamental principles of the common law; secondly, there was no clear legal basis for slavery in Belize and, in any event, any such legislation that purported to authorize slavery was void as being repugnant to fundamental principles of English law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House debate the issue and take the unanimous decision that:

1. The Government of Belize is morally, legally, and ethically obliged, on behalf of the former slaves and their descendants of Belize (then the British Settlement in the Bay of Honduras) to present the appropriate case in the United Kingdom to determine whether, as a matter of law, the United Kingdom is liable for the unlawful seizure, transportation and subsequent enslavement of African people in Belize under British Colonial Rule up until 1833, and to receive the appropriate reparations from Britain;

2. The Government of Belize, in presenting this case to the appropriate body, shall seek to value not only the economic cost of slavery in Belize but also, based on expert evidence, seek reparation for the former slaves and their descendants for the denial of their culture and history; human rights abuses, including but not limited to murder, rape, flogging, branding, denial of freedom of movement, freedom to worship, freedom to own land, and the right to education; and for the severe generational mental and psychological damage to slaves and their descendants, long after 1838, caused by their degraded status as slaves and perpetuated by associated systemic racism and racial discrimination;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Honourable House calls upon its sister CARICOM states to take similar decisions in their respective jurisdictions on this matter.

Cabinet's recommendation to be signified.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development and Investment)

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