

POST-CABINET BRIEFING FOR MONDAY APRIL 6th, 2009

Citizens and residents of St. Kitts and Nevis, good day. I bring to you the post-Cabinet briefing for Cabinet meeting held Monday April 6, 2009.

TAX AMNESTY

Cabinet reviewed legislation recently passed in Parliament issuing an amnesty to taxpayers in arrears with the payment of their taxes. Minister of Finance reminded the Cabinet that the objectives of the Amnesty legislation are:

1. To offer taxpayers an opportunity to present their cases to the Inland Revenue Department for review
2. To offer waiver of interest and penalties on all outstanding taxes and licenses, and
3. To offer incentives for late compliers and non-compliers who could use the opportunity to settle their accounts without penalty.

Under the amnesty plan, if payment of outstanding taxes is completed by September 2009:

1. There would be a 100% waiver of interest and penalties
2. There would be no interest charges accrued between April 2009 and September 2009
3. Tailor-made payment plans would be arranged during the six month period.

However, if payment of outstanding taxes is completed between October 2009 and December 2009:

1. There would be a 70% waiver of interest and penalties
2. Tailor-made payment plans would be arranged by december 2009.

Members complimented the Minister of Finance and his staff for crafting the visionary policy that gives taxpayers some breathing space at this time of global financial upheaval.

Employment Matters

Government, through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, has been exploring a number of alternatives to ensure that the operation of a call centre continues at the Stanford Building near the airport. Government is involved in serious and sustained dialogue with current as well as prospective operators who have made proposals to continue the operations at the identified location.

Cabinet is of the view that the building must be used for its intended purpose, which is to ensure that our citizens can find employment opportunities in a modern, state-of-the-art call centre. It is envisaged that over 100 jobs will be created, thereby assimilating employees who would have been laid off, as well as an additional 30 or so persons who are in search of employment.

The government sees as a core part of its responsibility at this time of global economic downturn, actively assisting in the creation of successful private sector ventures with a view to creating employment opportunities and other spin-off economic activities for the benefit of the local population.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Cabinet has identified the week of April 23 as a tentative date for the next sitting of the Parliament and has requested that the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs consider bringing before Parliament new legislation to outlaw gangs in the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis. The Hon. Attorney General assured the Cabinet that he had already been conducting research of model legislation from other jurisdictions and that he would move swiftly to ensure that the new bill outlawing gangs be brought to Parliament for passage within the shortest time possible.

A number of other pieces of legislation have been earmarked for tabling at the next sitting of the Parliament including legislation to fully root in law the establishment of the National Enterprise Development Division (NEDD). The NEDD is a partner agency of SKIPA, the St. Kitts Investment Promotion Agency. NEDD will however concentrate on helping small local businesses develop planning and management capacity. SKIPA on the other hand works with both small and large businesses to help them access and expedite business opportunities.

Cabinet complimented the Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs, the Hon. Dennis Merchant, for his efforts that have resulted in an extremely active legislative agenda over the past few years.

YOUTH HOMICIDE

Members of Cabinet spent a few moments reflecting on the recent unfortunate incident in which a juvenile in Cayon lost his life due to violence. Cabinet requests that members of the public take a moment to pray for the comfort and sustenance of the two families involved. Cabinet further requests that worship sessions in schools be used to denounce violence and to teach young boys and girls how to resolve conflicts.

END

This brings to an end the Post-Cabinet briefing for Monday April 6, 2009.

Thank you!