

Cabinet Meeting of October 16th, 2001

Office of the Prime Minister
Cabinet Meeting No. 23 of 2001
Press Briefing

Belmopan - 17 October, 2001.

Cabinet met in regular session on Tuesday October 16th, 2001. The following items are submitted for public information:

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\$2.4 million approved to start re-building homes destroyed by Iris.

Cabinet agreed to set aside an initial of \$2.4 million dollars to begin immediate reconstruction of homes destroyed by Hurricane Iris in the southern districts. The money will come from the Social Security system and will be disbursed through the development Finance Corporation as concessionary loans to those persons who are prepared to make an early start to re-build their homes.

The loans will be available for the construction of low income housing between \$6,000 and \$12,000 per unit. They will be issued on a flexible mortgage programme at 8 1/2 percent per annum interest spread over a period of 20 years, with a 6-month grace period. DFC will waive the legal fees, as well as stamp duty and other administration costs.

Responding to the housing needs in the aftermath of Hurricane Iris, a Cabinet Committee has been appointed under the Chairmanship of Rural Development Minister Marcial Mes, with Housing Minister Dickie Bradley, Works Minister Henry Canton and Agriculture Minister Daniel Silva. The Committee will work with technical personnel from DFC, the Minister of Works and the Ministry of Housing to finalize plans for the construction of both temporary housing and permanent, affordable hurricane-proof homes for the Toledo District. The Committee will identify the materials needed for construction as well as determine the bills of quantity and supervisors required to initiate a full-scale building programme.

The objective is to design a low cost structure with a solid concrete hurricane resistant room at its core on a 4 to 6 inch concrete foundation, which will allow homeowners to add a structure with materials of their choice while being assured of a safe area within their residence in the event of a future disaster.

Prime Minister Said Musa informed the nation Monday that some 3,178 homes were destroyed by Hurricane Iris in the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts leaving up to 13,000 persons homeless. The proposed houses cost approximately \$12,000 each, and the housing sector will require an estimated \$40 million in new financing. The Prime Minister of the Bahamas has pledged that his country will donate a certain number of these houses as their contribution to our reconstruction efforts.

Cabinet directed the Attorney General's Ministry to finalize ongoing consultations and proceed with early implementation of the necessary legislation to establish a building code the entire country.

In other hurricane related news, Cabinet decided to create and print a special postage stamp to raise funds for reconstruction of the southern districts.

Other Cabinet decisions:

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In a move designed to protect local musicians, Cabinet today decided to remove the duties charged on locally produced musical cd, cassettes and to increase the duty payable on imported blank cds.

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Cabinet agreed to transfer those lands used for parks, playgrounds and community centers to Village Councils as part of its programme of rural empowerment.

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Cabinet will meet in regular session on Tuesday October 30th, 2001.

For further information contact:

ROBERT LESLIE

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October 6th, 2001.

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