

**“The Historical and Institutional Contexts of
the National Statistical Coordination Committee”**

Remarks by the Acting Financial Secretary Mrs. Sonia McLaughlin

On the Launch of the
National Statistical Coordination Committee,
18 April 2013, Hibiscus Conference Rm (GT Hospital)

**Honorable Premier, Minister of Finance, District Administration, Works,
Land and Agriculture Mrs. Juliana O’Connor-Connolly; Fellow Workers in
Government; Guests from the Private Sector and the Media: Good morning.**

My very brief remarks aim to provide the historical and institutional contexts of today’s event - the launch of the National Statistical Coordination Committee.

Way back in early 2005, then Deputy Director of the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO), Mr. Stran Bodden who is now Chief Officer of the Ministry of Tourism and Development, invited the Caribbean Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) to conduct a statistical assessment mission in the Cayman Islands. This was granted and the mission performed the assessment in May 18-27, 2005.

The mission made a thorough review of the data collection activities of the ESO and a few other agencies including the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority (CIMA). They also held meetings with the private sector, myself and Mr. Peter Gough who was then Deputy Financial Secretary. ESO was at that time (and still

is) under the supervision of the Portfolio of Finance and Economics, now the Ministry of Finance.

The mission noted that the *Statistics Law (1996 Revision)* which governs the ESO, states that one of its functions is “generally to organize a coordinated scheme of social and economic statistics and intelligence pertaining to the Islands.” This has been carried out through informal arrangements, primarily in the compilation of the annual *Compendium of Statistics*) as well *Annual Economic Report*. (Recently, *Quarterly Economic Reports* have also been produced.)

Among the key finding of the CARTAC mission is that “there are currently no means of setting priorities in the statistics area. The mission, therefore, recommended the creation of a *national statistical coordinating committee*. Such a committee would serve the purpose of advising the chief statistician on planning and prioritization in the statistical program. Further, the committee would serve the purpose of advising the Government on needed resources to initiate statistical programs, setting the stage for budgetary approval.”

The formation of NSCC is thus a fulfillment of CARTAC’s recommendation. I note that one of its four functions as noted by the Cabinet is to “facilitate capacity building, statistical planning and prioritization.” NSCC members shall be invited to make recommendations on the prioritization of statistical programs to be pursued by ESO, to ensure that these will be driven by local data needs.

You may ask: if the recommendation was made in 2005 why did we wait so long to implement it? The simple answer is that ESO had to put its own house “in

order” first before it can have the credibility to coordinate with other departments and ministries in developing the national statistical system. The CARTAC Mission Report identified priority areas of data collection that ESO must implement to develop a macroeconomic statistics program compliant with the International Monetary Fund’s *General Data Dissemination System (GDDS)*. These recommendations were the basis of the reforms that were first presented in the *ESO Strategic Plan 2006-2009*. These reforms consist of the System of National Accounts (SNA) and the Balance of Payments (BOP) system, complemented by the rebasing of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

To implement the Strategic Plan, the ESO was restructured in 2007. This paved the way for the launching of the SNA and BOP system in 2008. A new CPI basket was also adopted in 2009. In addition, ESO began in 2008 the preparation for the Census which was conducted in 2010. These required additional human resources as well as technical training which were mostly provided for by external agencies such as the CARICOM Secretariat, CARTAC, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). All these elements have slowly produced an array of statistics that are compliant with international standards although much remains to be done. Today, we have gross domestic product (GDP) statistics for the 16 major economic sectors and more than 100 sub-sectors comprising the Cayman Islands economy; current account of the balance of payments that estimates the major receipts from and payments to the rest of the world for goods, services, transfers and income; and a new CPI system that produces price inflation rates for consumer goods and services classified in accordance with the UN Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP).

After the release of the Census Report in April 2012, it was time for ESO to revisit the CARTAC recommendation regarding the NSCC.

The success of NSCC will not rest on ESO alone. This will be a collegial responsibility, shared by all its members.

And so we are here today to take a key step towards the development of official statistics in the Cayman Islands. From now on, we should think of official statistics beyond the ESO to include all departments and other public sector authorities who will volunteer as part of the NSCC.

I look forward to the benefits that will be born out of the NSCC. In particular, it is my hope that the NSCC will take upon itself to help build statistical capacities across its member departments, and create a pervasive consciousness that statistics matter because they are key to making evidence-based decision-making. May the NSCC succeed in this endeavor, preferably without additional budget from the CIG.

Good day, and may the good Lord bless your plans and efforts!