

**Message from the Chief Secretary, the Hon. George McCarthy, OBE  
for the CICSA/Freedom of Information Civil Servant Meeting  
Mary Miller Hall, Grand Cayman  
Thursday, 27 September 2007**

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Salutations....

It is indeed my pleasure to be here at this meeting today.

By now, most of you will have heard some details about freedom of information. You are also doubtless aware that the Freedom of Information Law has been passed by the Legislative Assembly and is to be signed by the Governor, and that --- for the first time in our history --- we here in the Cayman Islands will shortly have a guaranteed right to ask about government business.

In consequence however, this extremely important development has generated some crucial questions amongst you, such as 'how will the law be implemented?' and, 'as civil servants, what are our roles in the implementation process?' With these queries in mind, I accordingly commend the Cayman Islands Civil Service Association and the Freedom of Information Unit for their initiative in organizing this meeting to introduce the new law and its implications.

And of this I am sure: the Freedom of Information Law will have a tremendous impact on the way the public sector goes about its everyday business. Not only will we have to fundamentally change the way we think about and respond to requests for government information, we will also have to reorganize and seek to publish more information about the functions and services provided by each public authority with access and openness in mind.

As stewards of government information, we public servants are at the centre of all such change. But I want to assure you that you will be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to efficiently function in your added capacity of information keepers.

You are the key to successfully implementing the Freedom of Information Law and therefore, prior to January 2009 when the law comes into effect, the FOI Unit will be undertaking an extensive training programme for all civil servants. This will focus on expanding your freedom of information knowledge and will include basic and advanced training for information managers within each public authority. Alongside this, civil servants will be provided with training by the National Archives in records management and the other processes essential to retrieving and archiving of government records which will be essential for FOI to work.

I believe that with the full support from government, the Freedom of Information Unit is fully committed to prepare you in the best way possible. This is your law too and while as civil servants you will be the ones who breathe life into it, as citizens and residents it will also bring you greater insight into government functions.

It is my sincere belief that the new Freedom of Information Law will help us to achieve the highest ideals of a democratic nation by creating a more informed society. Embrace it, and arm yourself with as much knowledge as possible, because with the help of this law we will together chart the course for the continued prosperity of our Islands.

I thank you.