

**Welcome Message from the Hon Chief Secretary George McCarthy, OBE
FOI Chief Officers Retreat
November 2008
Grand Cayman**

Salutations...

It is my pleasure to welcome you today to the final FOI Chief Officers Retreat before Cayman's Freedom of Information Law comes into effect in January.

Much has been achieved over the past 15 months and I congratulate the Freedom of Information Unit and the Cabinet Office for their efforts in preparing the Cayman Islands Government for the implementation of this new law.

With steadfast dedication, the FOI Unit has established all of the necessary procedures, regulations and guidelines. Approximately 150 Information Managers have been trained and over 2,700 civil servants sensitized to their duties, responsibilities and rights under the FOI Law.

Awareness levels among civil society and the public at large have been raised and the Information Managers Network, being a peer support system, was also created to ensure they all have the necessary support and assistance once the Law comes into effect. In addition, the FOI Unit has already hosted five Information Managers Network meetings, three legal retreats, three Chief Officers' forums and six briefings for Heads of Departments.

But, let me hasten to add, the FOI Unit has not achieve this alone. Many of the implementation milestones such as the baseline assessments, records surveys, staff training and the development of e-publication schemes, were reached because of your enthusiastic leadership and support for our new Information Managers.

As Chief and Principal Officers, **you** are the leaders of our public sector! And as such, you play a critical role in setting the tone for this transformation; you have had to plan for and support the necessary administrative changes. You must also spearhead the

cultural change that is so essential if we are to alter the traditional Civil Service mindset that says “what we do in Government must stay in Government.”

I believe that today’s agenda will help you make the final preparations to enable your authorities to meet all of the FOI requirements by January 2009. Mr. Ian Fenton will brief you on the Government-wide progress in accordance with the FOI Implementation Plan, while Mrs. Carole Excell will detail the process of internal review. Both of these subjects will surely elicit a profusion of questions and discussions and I urge you take the opportunity to actively participate in today’s dialogue on the FOI process.

Because the FOI Law will fundamentally alter the way people see Government, as well as change the way we do business, it is imperative that you visibly support this process. Positive, strong and knowledgeable leadership is vital to the success of this transformational initiative.

As such, your guidance should include instilling pride in your staff members for being part of this historic process and motivating them to be the agents of change.

I wish you luck on this journey and look forward to a very exciting year ahead.

Thank you.