

BELIZE

No. HR39/1/13

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 18th October 2024

10:00 AM

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SUPPLEMENTARY (1)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

6. Paper.

No. HR267A/1/13 - Supplementary Appropriation
Schedule for Fiscal Year 2024/2025.

*(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic
Development, Investment, Civil Aviation, and Immigration)*

7. Presentation of Reports from Select Committees.

No. HR270A/1/13 - Report from the Finance and
Economic Development Committee
on the Finance Belize (Recognition
and Exemption) Bill, 2024.

*(The Honourable Chairperson of the Finance and Economic Development
Committee)*

No. HR275/1/13 - Report from the Committee of
Selection on the Appointment of
Members to fill the vacancies in the
Standing Committees of the House
of Representatives.

(The Honourable Chairperson of the Committee of Selection)

12. Introduction of Bills.

**1. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation
(2024/2025) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the
use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year
ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and
twenty-five.

2. Financial Services Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to amend the Financial Services
Commission Act, Act No. 8 of 2023; to provide for the
Chairperson of the Appeal Panel to be the Chief Justice, a
Judge of the High Court or an Attorney-at-Law with the
qualifications of a judge of the High Court; and to provide
for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

3. **Securities Industry (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Securities Industry Act, Act No. 46 of 2021; to provide for appeals of decisions of the Commission to be made to the Appeal Panel under the Financial Services Commission Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

4. **Income and Business Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Income and Business Tax Act, Chapter 55 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to exempt certain employed individuals from chargeability to income tax; to remove income tax deduction anomalies; to remove the tax on interest income on time deposits; to apply double tax treaty relief provisions to all treaty countries, not just Commonwealth countries; to encourage UK pensioners to reside in Belize; to regularize withholding of tax on gross contract payments; to incentivize private sector support of sports and educational development in Belize; to make clarifying amendments; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

5. **Tax Administration and Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Tax Administration and Procedure Act, Chapter 51 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to improve tax administration and enhance tax compliance; to enable electronic tax invoicing; to make clarifying amendments; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

6. **General Sales Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the General Sales Tax Act, Chapter 63 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to enable electronic tax invoicing; to make clarifying amendments; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

7. **Stamp Duties (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Duties Act, Chapter 64 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to exempt certain instruments from stamp duty; to make clarifying amendments; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

8. **Business Names (Amendment) Bill, 2024.**

Bill for an Act to amend the Business Names Act, Chapter 247 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to make a Certificate of Registration valid for one year; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

9. Designated Processing Areas (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to amend the Designated Processing Areas Act, Chapter 280 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to accommodate the continued development of the Global Digital Services Sector; to incentivise and further support the Aquaculture Sector; to establish a Special Border Entertainment Zone; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Investment, Civil Aviation, and Immigration)

10. National Institute of Culture and History (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to amend the National Culture and History Act, Chapter 331 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to strengthen the power of the National Institute of Culture and History to protect and preserve resources in reserves; to standardize the definition of Minister throughout the Act; to provide stricter penalties for offences; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, Education, Culture, Science, and Technology)

11. Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to amend the Marriage Act, Chapter 174 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to increase the age of marriage to eighteen years; to remove provisions for consent to marriage of infants to be given by parents or guardians; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Minister of Human Development, Families, and Indigenous Peoples' Affairs)

12. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to amend the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital Authority Act, Chapter 38 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020; to provide for independent union membership on the Board of Governors; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness)

14. Public Business.

A. Government Business

I MOTIONS *(For Text of Motion see Notice Papers attached)*

- 1. Caribbean Development Bank – Ninth Consolidated Line of Credit for the Development Finance Corporation – Loan and Guarantee Motion, 2024.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

- 2. Resolution for the Expansion of the Protection of Belize’s Total Ocean Space and the Medium Bio-Diversity Protection Zones Motion, 2024.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

- 3. Resolution Recommending the Appointment of a Person to Act as Auditor General Motion, 2024.

Cabinet’s recommendation to be signified.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Investment, Civil Aviation, and Immigration)

- 4. Motion to adopt the Report from the Committee of Selection, 2024.

(The Honourable Chairperson of the Committee of Selection)

II BILL FOR SECOND READING

- 1. Finance Belize (Recognition and Exemption) Bill, 2024.

Bill for an Act to recognize and acknowledge the formation and existence of Finance Belize Limited as a private sector entity, not-for-profit, limited by guarantee, without share capital and non-political; to promote Belize as a financial services center; to grant it exemption from all taxes, duties and other imposts; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Investment, Civil Aviation, and Immigration)

III COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON BILLS

IV BILLS FOR THIRD READING



BELIZE

No. HR39/1/13

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 18th October 2024

10:00 AM

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SUPPLEMENTARY (1)

NOTICE OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS

MOTIONS

1. **Caribbean Development Bank – Ninth Consolidated Line of Credit for the Development Finance Corporation – Loan and Guarantee Motion, 2024.**

Notice given on 16th October 2024.

WHEREAS, section 15(1) of the Development Finance Corporation Act, Chapter 279, Revised Edition 2020; provides that the Development Finance Corporation (the “DFC”) may, with the approval of the Minister of Finance, and subject to the principles of sound fiscal management, borrow sums domestically or internationally, for meeting any of its obligations or discharging any of its functions;

AND WHEREAS, section 15(4) of the Development Finance Corporation Act, as amended by the Development Finance Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2022 (Act No. 6 of 2022), further provides that the Aggregate Domestic Debt of or above Five Million Belize Dollars (BZ\$5,000,000) shall only be validly entered into pursuant to a Resolution of the National Assembly authorising the DFC to raise the loan or to borrow the money;

AND WHEREAS, the Caribbean Development Bank (the “Bank”) has offered a Line of Credit totaling Twenty Million United States Dollars (US\$20,000,000) to the DFC to assist in providing finance for priority sectors, such as MSME credit, student loans, low-income housing and energy efficiency and renewable energy;

AND WHEREAS, one of the conditions is that the Loan shall be guaranteed by the Government of Belize as per section 12(1) of the Loans (Caribbean Development Bank) Act, Chapter 74 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020, which provides, *inter alia*, that the Government may, in such manner and on such terms and subject to such conditions as may be agreed by it and the Bank, guarantee the discharge by a company of the company’s obligations under any agreement for borrowing from the Bank;

AND WHEREAS, section 7(6) of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition, 2020, provides that before the Government offers any guarantee or some other form of security in support of any loan made directly to a private sector entity or statutory body by any public or private bank, financial institution or capital market in or outside Belize, the Government shall seek the approval of the National Assembly;

AND WHEREAS, the main terms and conditions of the Line of Credit are as follows—

Loan Amount:	US\$20,000,000 allocated as follows— US\$18,000,000 from the Bank's Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR); US\$2,000,000 from the Bank's Special Fund Resources (SFR);
Rate of Interest:	Interest shall be paid quarterly at the rate of 0.75% per annum on the amount of the SFR portion withdrawn and outstanding from time to time and at the rate of 5.60% per annum on the amount of the OCR portion withdrawn and outstanding from time to time;
Repayment Terms:	Sixty-eight (68) equal, or approximately equal, and consecutive quarterly installments on each due date, commencing on the first due date after the expiry of five (5) years after the agreement date;
Commitment Fee:	0.25% payable annually by the DFC on any undrawn amount of the OCR portion only. There will be no commitment fee for the SFR portion;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House, being satisfied that this Loan to the DFC would contribute to the social and productive sectors of Belize and impact poverty reduction by providing greater access to funding for key targeted sectors of the economy, (i) approves that the DFC may borrow the said sum of Twenty Million United States Dollars (US\$20,000,000) from the Caribbean Development Bank on the terms and conditions set out above, and further authorises the Board of Directors of the DFC to execute and deliver the Loan Agreement and other associated documents; (ii) approves that all principal, interest, fees, premiums and other charges under the loan shall be tax, fee, duty or charge exempt as provided for in the loan and guarantee agreements; and (iii) further approves and confirms that the Government may enter into a Guarantee Agreement with the Caribbean Development Bank on terms and conditions set out above, and further authorises the Minister of Finance to execute and deliver the said Guarantee Agreement and all documents associated therewith.

Cabinet's recommendation to be signified.

2. Resolution for the Expansion of the Protection of Belize's Total Ocean Space and the Medium Bio-Diversity Protection Zones Motion, 2024.

Notice given on 15th October 2024.

WHEREAS, on the 4th November 2021, the Government of Belize and The Nature Conservancy finalized a debt conversion transaction and signed the Belize Blue Loan Agreement (BLA) and the Conservation Funding Agreement (CFA), collectively known as the Belize Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation;

AND WHEREAS, the BLA and the CFA are contingent on the delivery of Eight Primary Conservation Commitments/Targets and an agreed payment schedule to be realized by the Government of Belize by the 8th anniversary of the agreements;

AND WHEREAS, Clause one of the CFA outlines Belize’s obligations to complete a legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) and designate up to 30 percent of its Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones and outlines the seven (7) legally binding commitments to be achieved through the delivery of the MSP;

AND WHEREAS, as of 4th November 2022, the Government of Belize has successfully delivered Milestones 1, 2, and 3 and is expected to achieve Milestone 4 by the 4th of November 2024;

AND WHEREAS, Milestone 4 of the CFA states that “*No later than three (3) years after signing the Agreement, the National Assembly shall approve, and the Government shall formally sign into law and Gazette Biodiversity Protection Zones (BPZs) covering a total of 25% of its Ocean.*”;

AND WHEREAS, to date Belize has legally designated 20.05% or 669,046 hectares (6,690.46 km²) of its Total Ocean Space (3,336,789 hectares or 33,367.89 km²) as Biodiversity Protection Zones (BPZs);

AND WHEREAS, to meet the Milestone 4 target, a minimum of 165,100 hectares (1651.51 km²) or 4.95% of Belize’s Ocean space is being proposed to be further designated as Medium Protection Biodiversity Zones as follows:

BELIZE PROTECTION FOR BIODIVERSITY ZONES STATS		
	Area (km2)	%
Total Ocean Space	33706.990070	
Terrestrial area	339.102061	
Total Ocean Space without terrestrial areas	33367.898730	
Total Marine Protected Areas	6840.434958	
Marine Protected Areas without terrestrial areas	6690.457755	20.05%
High Biodiversity Protection Zone (without terrestrial areas)	3894.964545	11.67%
Medium Biodiversity Protection Zone (without terrestrial areas)	2795.493210	8.38%
Proposed Medium Biodiversity Protection Zones	1669.649288	5.00%
Lighthouse Reef General Use II	720.562325	2.16%
Lighthouse Reef General Use I	507.447885	1.52%
Glover's Reef General Use Zone (Expansion)	261.649800	0.78%
Bacalar Chico General Use Zone (Expansion)	179.989278	0.54%
TOTAL	8360.107043	25.05%

AND WHEREAS, the CFA obligates Belize to protect up to 30% of its total ocean space as 15% High Protection Biodiversity Zones (no take) and 15% Medium Protection Biodiversity Zones (general use);

AND WHEREAS, the proposed 4.95% expansion will be designated as **Medium Protection Biodiversity Zones** which are described in the Conservation Funding Agreement as “*zones suitable for some level of extraction and sea-bed alteration, with appropriate management and direction, depending on the objective of each designated area*”;

AND WHEREAS, the Conservation Funding Agreement stipulates that the identification and designation of new biodiversity protection zones within Belize’s ocean space is to be guided through a science-based and stakeholder-driven Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) process which takes into account the ecological, economic, and social considerations within Belize’s blue space;

AND WHEREAS, as per maps attached, these zones were identified through the ongoing national Marine Spatial Planning Process and represent areas that (i) have current and historical support from stakeholders; (ii) a strong scientific basis for their biodiversity and ecosystems functionality and connectivity and benefit to the wider Belize Barrier Reef System; (iii) economic significance and importance to people and livelihoods; and (iv) complement ongoing management efforts and objectives identified in existing management plans and legislation;

AND WHEREAS, the delivery of Milestone 4 is co-led by the Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute and the Belize Fisheries Department through targeted stakeholder engagement employing a transparent, inclusive and equitable process in accordance with global MSP best practices and section (14) (1) – (6) of the Fisheries Resources Act, No.7 of 2020;

AND WHEREAS, the process spanned 11 months of extensive data collection, analysis and participatory mapping and the stakeholder consultation process included 31 meetings with a total of 497 participants representing 16 stakeholder groups, including Academia, Aquaculture and Mariculture, Coastal Development, Community-Based Organizations, Donor Organizations, Fishing Industry Post-harvest, Fishing Industry Wild Capture, Government Ministries, Government and Statutory Bodies, International Conservation Organizations, Media and Communications, MPA Co-Managers, National Conservation Organizations, Social Development Organizations, Tourism and Recreation, and the Public;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House being satisfied of the need for Belize's obligations to complete a legally enforceable Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) and designate up to 30 percent of its Ocean in Biodiversity Protection Zones, approves the expansion of the protection of Belize's Total Ocean Space and the designation of its Medium Bio-Diversity Protection Zones covering a total of 25% of its Ocean.

Cabinet's recommendation to be signified.

3. Resolution Recommending the Appointment of a Person to Act as Auditor General Motion, 2024.

Notice given on 17th October 2024.

WHEREAS, section 109(2) of the Belize Constitution provides that, if after the 15th day of January, 2002, the office of the Auditor-General is vacant or if the holder of that office is for any reason unable to exercise the functions of his office, the Governor-General, acting on the recommendations of both Houses of the National Assembly contained in resolutions passed in that behalf, may appoint a person to act as Auditor-General;

AND WHEREAS, the office of the Auditor-General has been vacant since 1st September 2024.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House recommends that **MS. MARIA RODRIGUEZ** be appointed to act as Auditor-General for a period of **four (4) months** with effect from the 1st day of September 2024.

Cabinet's recommendation to be signified.

(The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Investment, Civil Aviation, and Immigration)

4. **Motion to adopt the Report from the Committee of Selection, 2024.**

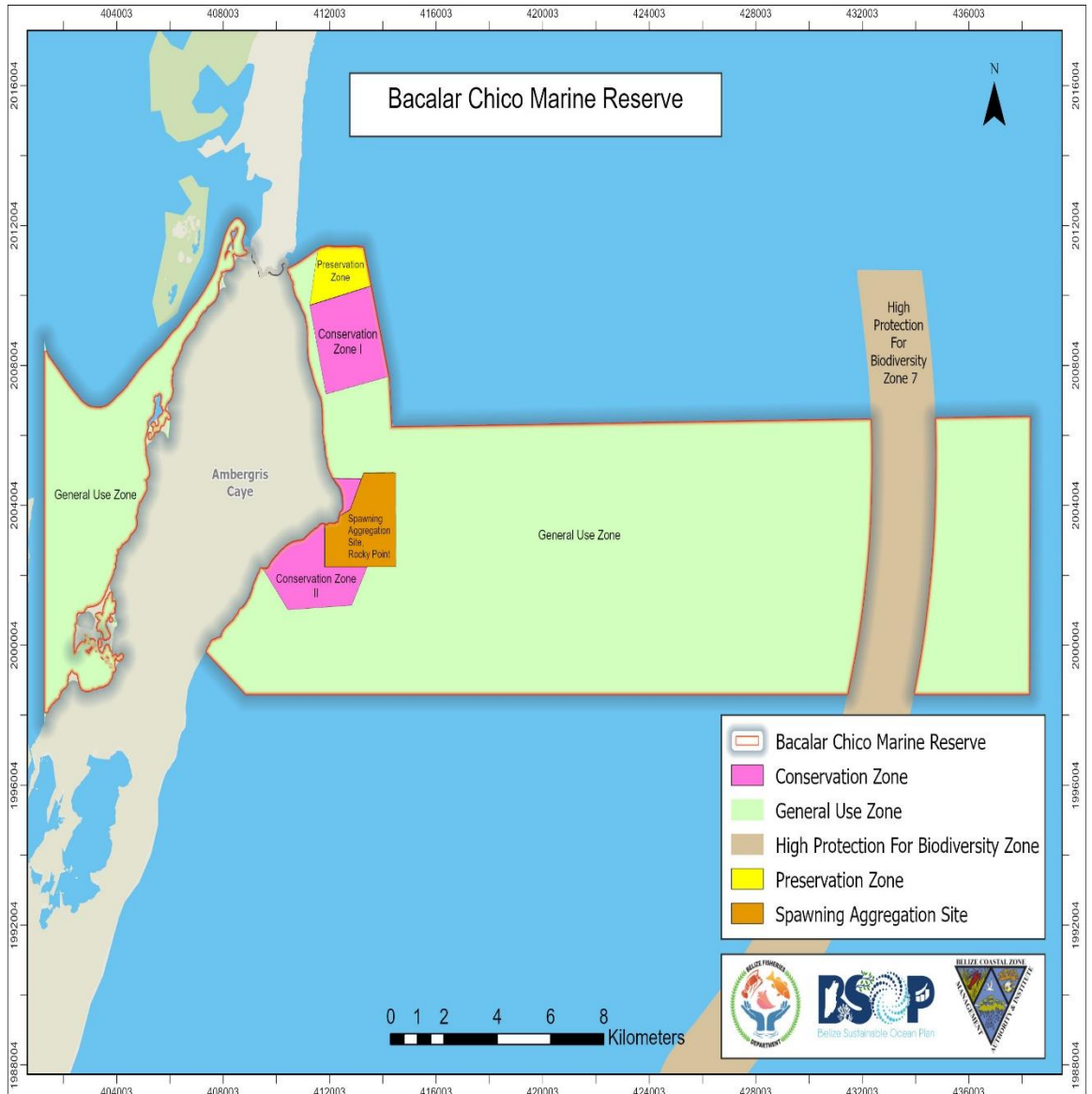
BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House adopts the Report from the Committee of Selection on the Appointment of Members to fill the vacancies in the Standing Committees of the House of Representatives.

(The Honourable Chairperson of the Committee of Selection)

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**ATTACHMENTS TO THE RESOLUTION FOR THE
EXPANSION OF THE PROTECTION OF BELIZE'S TOTAL
OCEAN SPACE AND THE MEDIUM BIO-DIVERSITY
PROTECTION ZONES MOTION, 2024.**

**MAP 1- BACALAR CHICO MARINE RESERVE HIGHLIGHTING
PROPOSED EXPANSION**



MAP 2 – LIGHTHOUSE REEF ATOLL MARINE RESERVE HIGHLIGHTING PROPOSED EXPANSION



MAP 3 – GLOVER’S REEF MARINE RESERVE HIGHLIGHTING PROPOSED EXPANSION

