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Support for Ninth Amendment

Monday, 22 August 2011. Arising out of meetings held today and last Friday, Government is pleased to announce that it has secured the full support of both the Evangelical Association of Churches and the Belize Council of Churches for the Ninth Constitution Amendment Bill.

The decision of the Churches came after frank discussions in which Government clarified the Bill's intentions and agreed to certain changes in order to allay publicly expressed fears and misconceptions. The changes will see the removal, before the Bill is brought back for passage through Parliament, of the specific language barring court enquiry into the validity of any law passed to alter the Constitution.

Both Church bodies were satisfied that the primary objective of the Ninth Amendment is to put into the Constitution and make unassailable Government's ownership of the essential utility services in electricity, telecommunications and water. And both bodies were also satisfied that this objective is entirely in the national interest and a fundamental and proper expression of Belizean sovereignty.

The Church leaders were convinced that the agreed trimming of the language in Sections 69(9) and 145(1) and (2) of the Bill, should put an end to any public disquiet over the Bill's purpose and effect.

For its part, Government assured the leaders that the Bill in its new form retained all the essential provisions. Therefore, it would still guarantee the impregnability of the utilities' nationalization.

Government points out that the official public consultation process is still ongoing and calls on the people of Belize to come out in support of the Ninth Amendment Bill. It also reiterates that additional changes to further safeguard the Bill may still be made, depending on the outcome of the consultation process.