



Ministerial Statement to the House of Assembly

Caribbean Council of Tourism Ministers Meeting and Caribbean Week 2013

By

The Hon. Shawn Crockwell, JP, MP
Minister of Tourism Development and Transport
June 14, 2013

Thank you Mr. Speaker,

Last week I was proud to represent Bermuda in New York at the Caribbean Tourism Organization's (CTO) annual Caribbean Week. As you may know, Bermuda is a long-time member of the CTO and the organisation serves in the role as the region's tourism development agency. It comprises membership of over 30 countries and territories including Dutch, English, French and Spanish, as well as a myriad of private sector allied members.

While we are, of course, not located physically in the Caribbean, among the benefits the organization provides include specialized support and technical assistance in sustainable tourism development, marketing, communications, advocacy, human resource development, research and information technology.

The CTO's vision is to position the Caribbean and Bermuda as the most desirable, year-round, warm weather destination, with the purpose of leading sustainable tourism.

Mr. Speaker,

In addition, the CTO, in partnership with the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association, jointly and equally owns the Caribbean Tourism Development Company, a marketing and business development entity dedicated to promoting the Caribbean brand worldwide.

Caribbean Week in New York is the CTO's largest endeavour of the year, with a series of consumer and industry related events, including, (i) the Students' **Colloquium** at which students studying at the tertiary level present sustainable tourism projects that are practical and can provide a sustainable source of income for Caribbean nationals; (ii) the Caribbean Diaspora Forum, developed in collaboration with the Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry; (iii) the Caribbean Media Marketplace where CTO member governments and private sector exhibitors interact with leading journalists from trade and consumer press; (iv) and the Media Awards **Luncheon** where the organization honours journalists for their award winning features.

I was accompanied by the Director of Tourism, Mr. Billy Griffith and we had a valuable opportunity to demonstrate to the many people in attendance why Bermuda offers "So Much More."

Mr. Speaker,

I would like to focus upon two of the most important aspects of Caribbean Week that I attended. The first was a gathering of the CTO Council of Ministers. Attended by Ministers representing the majority of the organization's 30 member countries, this meeting was beneficial in allowing us to see both the challenges and opportunities that my fellow Minister's face in their own destinations.

One common cause in this meeting was the crucial role that air service plays in the ability to sell and compete in today's global tourism marketplace. Countries throughout the region and, indeed, throughout the world are competing for an ever-shrinking piece of the aviation pie with fewer air carriers wielding an inordinate and greater amount of power than ever before. One area of particular concern which was highlighted at the meeting was the dramatic increase in the number of member countries who are delinquent in paying their annual dues to the CTO. Currently over 50% of the member countries are not financially compliant as a result of challenges of the economic downturn. I did officially state that Bermuda, as a compliant member, was not at all pleased by this development and urged the Chairman of the Council of Ministers to come up with an urgent solution for this situation.

Mr. Speaker,

Another important opportunity we capitalized upon during this trip was our participation in the CTO's Media Marketplace. This event provided us with

the chance to interact with more than 100 representatives of top consumer and trade media outlets, including Travel + Leisure magazine, Travel Weekly, Travel Agent, Travel Pulse, Fodors and many more. I was able to share with them news of our So Much More Summer offer and Golf Around Getaway currently in the market, as well as our Sizzling Summer on-island activities programme, including events such as Bermuda Nights, Harbour Nights and cultural activities such as the St. George's Walking Tours.

In addition, I was able to reinforce our proximity and air service options, including the new Delta service from LaGuardia, and highlight some of our high-profile sporting events such as the PGA Grand Slam of Golf.

The media was particularly interested in the question of whether Bermuda would consider allowing gaming in the destination. In fact, I conducted several in-depth interviews about our recently announced commitment to hold a gaming referendum later this year. This is, without a doubt, a hot button issue and the tourism industry is watching very closely whether or not Bermuda will become a player, so to speak, in this potentially lucrative market and thereby become more competitive.

The media was also very interested in our imminent shift to a Tourism Authority and the impact this may have on the industry. I emphasized that the statutory framework for the Tourism Authority will be debated in this Honorable House during this session. It was clear that the tourism media is paying close attention to what we are doing here in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

Our mission in New York reinforced to me that we need to continue to be as aggressive as humanly possible in marketing and selling our destination.

Each of the CTO member nations recognize that they are competing with increasingly aggressive and emerging destinations worldwide for the tourism dollar. And while we are not alone in our traditional challenges, such as air service and sustainability, we are also not alone in needing to find new ways to bring visitors to our destination. No longer can we or any destination sit back and wait for tourists to come here, simply because we have a beautiful beach or friendly people.

Tourists are looking for destinations that make the vacation or trip decision easy for them by offering world-class service, world-class facilities and a world-class experience. They want to be engaged with things to do, places to see and experiences to be had. In short, they want more.

Now, more than ever, we must give our visitors So Much More. The OBA government was elected to help turn around our tourism industry and I am confident that we are heading in the right direction.

We will do this by the establishment of an independent Tourism Authority that will be responsible for ensuring the effective execution of the National Tourism Plan. We will continue to highlight our existing strengths – our proximity, our beauty, our people - as well as focusing on our own distinctive cultural heritage and our tourism hubs, including Hamilton, St. George's and

St David's Island, the Royal Naval Dockyard, as well as our South Shore beaches and aquatic attractions.

It is also our responsibility to look at new ways to improve our business, such as exploring whether gaming is right for Bermuda, and working to attract investment in our destination. As I stated earlier this week, failure is not an option.

Thank you Mr. Speaker