



Government of Bermuda

Ministry of Economic Development

Ministerial Statement

To the House of Assembly

By

Dr. the Hon. E. Grant Gibbons, JP, MP

Minister of Economic Development

**INDUSTRY CONSULTATION ON A CONVERGED POLICY FOR
BROADCASTING AND AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA**

Friday, May 19th, 2017

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may recall on Friday, Friday 17th, 2017 I informed this Honourable House that as the Minister responsible for Telecommunications, I had commenced a review of the Government's existing policies and legislation relating to free-to-air broadcasting for both radio and television, many of which date back to the 1980s. I advised that this review would be considered in the broader context of the evolving audiovisual media services sector.

Mr. Speaker, an initial stage of this review was undertaken on February 10th when I issued a 'Request for Input' to the industry stakeholders. Input was sought on the basic issues which include licensing policies, local content policies, programme content and advertising rules.

Mr. Speaker, I have considered the submissions of our industry stakeholders in response to the 'Request for Input' and, now, I am in the process of evaluating various policy options for the creation of a new regulatory framework for

broadcasting and, more generally, for the provision of audiovisual media services in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, during the course of this week, industry stakeholders participated in individual meetings with our technical officers and advisors. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss a Draft Policy Overview document which outlined the issues raised by the existing legislative and regulatory framework covering broadcasting and other audiovisual media services. These issues include:

- The current regime is outdated and does not reflect digital convergence.
- The current regulatory regime governing these services is fragmented, with responsibility divided among the Minister responsible for telecommunications, the Regulatory Authority, the Broadcasting Commissioners, and the Telecommunication Commissioners.
- The future of over-the-air television in Bermuda is uncertain, with only one provider still active on the market.
- The availability of local television content is limited, especially for Bermudians who do not (or cannot afford to) subscribe to cable.
- Regulations applicable to programme content and advertising have not been reviewed in many years.
- Valuable radio frequency spectrum allocated to broadcasting does not appear to be used efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of this week, I convened a Roundtable to which a cross-section of industry CEOs discussed the current status of broadcasting in Bermuda and the policy priorities for the audiovisual media services sector going forward. This Roundtable was held at the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club.

Mr. Speaker, as per the individual meetings held with the industry stakeholders and our technical officers and advisors, CEOs who participated in the Roundtable were provided with questions which were used to guide the discussions. These questions included:

- How do you think Bermuda's broadcasting sector – and the broader audiovisual media sector (AVMS) will evolve over the next 5 -10 years?
- What should the Government's top three policy priorities be for Bermuda's broadcasting sector and for AVMS more broadly?
- Is Bermuda's current legislative and regulatory framework as applied to broadcasting and other AVMS working adequately now, and is it future-proof?
- What are the most important characteristics, types of experience, and powers for the responsible regulatory body (or bodies) to have going forward in order to effectively and efficiently oversee the broadcasting sector and AVMS more generally?
- What is the best way forward for the Government to encourage and facilitate the creation and distribution of local television programming content of a good quality, taking into account fiscal constraints?

Mr. Speaker, this Roundtable was televised and will therefore be available to the general public for viewing.

Mr. Speaker, for the next step in this process, that is, following the Roundtable discussions, I will issue a draft Policy Statement which will be open for public consultation. Once the policy is finalized and, subject to Cabinet approval, drafting instructions will be issued with a view to tabling legislation later this year.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.