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PRESS RELEASE

Minister Ferguson Concludes Visit to California

Belmopan, November 18, 2022. 10:00 a.m.

Hon. Rodwell Ferguson, Minister of Youth, Sports and Transport, headed a delegation on a visit to Santa Monica, California, from November 10 to 15, 2022.

Minister Ferguson and his delegation met with several groups of officials from Los Angeles and Santa Monica. Presentations and discussions were held on adaptive techniques for youth and sports enhancement, including a variety of issues affecting youth, sports and transportation.

The meeting was led by Mr. Barry Snell, Trustee for Santa Monica College and Board Member of downtown Santa Monica, and his wife Mrs. Kera Blades-Snell, Executive Director of Santa Monica Black Lives Association and owner of Jahvy International, who gave an overview of Santa Monica's community youth athletic programs and the city's electric transportation operations.

The team was given a tour of the Boys and Girls Club facility in Santa Monica. This youth facility hosts afterschool programs, which foster academic development, promote physical health and well-being, and provide a safe and supportive environment for the youth. They also visited Santa Monica College in order to become familiar with the various education programs offered for youth enhancement.

Additionally, the team toured the 'Big Blue Bird Bus Company' to get an overview of the operation of their transportation system, which utilizes electric buses. The company's Assistant Director of Operations Eric O'Connor offered advice on some practices Belize can adopt to its transportation sector.

Bilateral discussions were also held with members of the United Premier

Soccer League (UPSL) with respect to collaboration between UPSL and the football league in Belize. A tour of the SOFI Stadium and its operations was facilitated by Mr. Reggie Ellis, Athletic Director of Santa Monica College.

Finally, the team had an opportunity to meet with Mr. Rashad Rucher-Trapp and Mr. Raul Carlos, Co-founders and Chief Strategists of the Reimagine LA Foundation. The foundation advocates for equity and inclusion of youth and families. Mr. Trapp and Mr. Carlos briefed the group on the current youth and gang situation in Los Angeles as well as discussed programs created for youth and gang reduction.

Hon. Rodwell Ferguson expresses a heartfelt thank you to Mr. Barry Snell, and Mrs. Kera Blades-Snell for organizing and facilitating the visit as well as other officials who took time out of their packed schedules to ensure that the visit to Santa Monica was successful. The visit serves as a springboard for future discussions and collaboration that will lead to further youth development in Belize through sports, educational programs and other key areas.

Ends

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