

## Making business easier. Aggressive digitization speeds up registration and setup of a business in Belize



*By Rubén Morales Iglesias*

Belize's aggressive digitization is making it easier to register and set up a business in Belize said Lincoln Blake, Director of the Investment Policy and Compliance Unit at the Belize Investment Summit.

According to Blake, the Government's is undertaking a very aggressive digitization which has several of the Government services undergoing a 'paradigm shift.' Belize has even established a Ministry of E-Governance to oversee the entire digitization process. Blake highlighted that a review of the Ease of Doing Business Report, showed that starting a business was what we did worst in Belize when it came to investments.

The World Bank reports that establishing a company in Belize took from 7 to 10 days. However, Blake indicated that digitization has reduced registration of a company to three days. The goal is eight hours, he said. "That entire digitization process is reducing costs for the business and has also made it more efficient for companies to become established and to implement their projects as quickly as possible," Blake said.

Belize has also reduced the time to register for GST and Business Tax. The World Bank figures showed it took 17 days to register for GST and 10 days for Business Tax. That has now been reduced to three days and the objective is to cut it down to one day. In the case of the Labour Department, the World Bank said it took 4 to 7 weeks to process work permits for skilled labour that businesses want to bring in for training. Now, that has been reduced to seven days.

Blake concluded that doing Belize is getting easier, but for the process to become more efficient, the E-Governance Ministry has to ensure the entire process is properly implemented. "It's important to have a Ministry of E-Governance because when you're doing all of this digitization you have to ensure that the systems that you're digitizing can speak to each other," Blake said. "There has to be some harmony, some sort of coordination. And, that is key, in order for that entire process to be efficient and to be properly implemented."