



# PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

## OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

**Second Meeting of the 2021/2022 Session**  
*Third Sitting*

**Wednesday**  
**1<sup>st</sup> December, 2021**  
*(Pages 1-50)*

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MP,**  
**Speaker**

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PRESENT WERE:

#### MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency — “MSCR”
Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister for Finance and Economic Development <i>and</i> Border Control <i>and</i> Labour — “FEDBCL”
Hon. Juliana Y. O’Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	Minister for Education <i>and</i> District Administration <i>and</i> Lands — “EDAL”
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Minister for Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage — “HAYSCH”
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Minister for Tourism and Transport — “T&T”
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	Minister for Financial Services and Commerce — “FSC” <i>and</i> Investment, Innovation and Social Development — “IISD”
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister for Health and Wellness — “MOH”
Hon. Johany S. “Jay” Ebanks, MP	Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure — “PAHI”

#### EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert Hon, JP	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel. W. Bulgin, QC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

#### ELECTED MEMBERS GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Parliamentary Secretary to FSC and EDAL
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to T&T and IISD, Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to HAYSCH and PAHI, Elected Member for East End
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to Housing, Labour, and T&T; Elected Member for Bodden Town East

#### OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town East
Mr. Joseph X. Hew, MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town North
Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, QC, JP, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. David C. Wight, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town West

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**  
**SECOND MEETING 2021/22 SESSION**  
**WEDNESDAY**  
**1 DECEMBER 2021**  
**10:56AM**  
*Third Sitting*

*[Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Speaker, presiding]*

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

I call on the honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman to say prayers this morning.

**PRAYERS**

**Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman:** Let us pray.

*Almighty God, from whom all wisdom and power are derived: We beseech Thee so to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Parliament now assembled, that all things may be ordered upon the best and surest foundations for the glory of Thy Name and for the safety, honour and welfare of the people of these Islands.*

*Bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II; Charles, Prince of Wales; and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands, the Premier; the Speaker of the Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers of the Cabinet, Ex-officio Members and Members of the Parliament; the Chief Justice and members of the Judiciary, that we may be enabled faithfully to perform the responsible duties of our high office. All this we ask for Thy great Name's sake.*

Let us say The Lord's Prayer together: *Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

*The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us and give us peace, now and always.*

*Amen.*

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Proceedings of this honourable Parliament are now resumed.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS  
OR AFFIRMATIONS**

**The Speaker:** None.

**READING BY THE HONOURABLE  
SPEAKER OF MESSAGES  
AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**The Speaker:** None.

**PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS**

**The Speaker:** None.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS  
AND OF REPORTS**

**The Speaker:** None.

**QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE  
MINISTERS AND MEMBERS  
OF THE CABINET**

**The Speaker:** None.

**STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE  
MINISTERS AND MEMBERS  
OF THE CABINET**

**The Speaker:** We have a statement from the Honourable Premier.  
Honourable Premier.

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton, Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, Elected Member for Newlands:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to welcome the honourable Member for Bodden Town East, Mr. Dwayne Seymour to the right side of the House—to the Government bench.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Section 54 (1) (a) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order, His Excellency the Governor has appointed Mr. Seymour, or “John-John” as he is more affectionately known, as Parliamentary Secretary to:

- The Minister with responsibility for Labour;
- The Minister with responsibility for Housing; and
- The Minister with responsibility for Transport.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that more will be put on his plate, as this PACT Government continues to chart our recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and seeks to create further opportunities for shared prosperity, and prepares our people to avail themselves of all the opportunities which my Government seeks to create. This is a proud moment for the PACT Government, and indeed, for the Cayman Islands.

The Minister for Planning called the Member for Bodden Town East, and our newest Parliamentary Secretary, “the missing link” to the PACT Government. I say this is an example of placing the country and our people first, as his return to Government helps to make a difference in the lives of, not only his constituents in Bodden Town East, but to Caymanians and the rest of the country as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, we warmly welcome him to the fold. He no longer has to be concerned about being like John the Baptist, a voice crying out in the wilderness. His voice, and more importantly the voice of the people of Bodden Town East, whom he proudly represents, will be loudly and clearly heard.

I am especially grateful, Mr. Speaker, that we have united Bodden Town—in fact, all the Eastern Districts are now represented in this Government. I think everyone probably knows but certainly those people from the Eastern side of the Island, how interconnected our needs and issues are, and it goes way beyond electoral boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, my team and I look forward to working with the honourable Member, the newest Member of the Government and Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Dwayne Seymour. I think he will add to the accomplishments of this Government and he will utilise his experience as a former Minister and his experience as a representative, otherwise, to add significantly to our capacity to deliver on behalf of the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I thank your good self for joining me and my colleagues last night, as we gathered with Mr. Seymour and his constituents to show our support of, and respect for, our newest member of the PACT Government. I reiterate what I said Friday in my Budget Policy Statement:

We are here today because the people made a choice in April to elect a government that cares about

people; that cares about community; that cares about country. The move by Mr. Seymour to Government strengthens us in our commitment to our people and our country.

Mr. Speaker, his inclusion in Government will help us, as we continue to offer the people leadership to create a more sustainable future for the Cayman Islands that balances the needs of society, the economy and the environment. As the Minister of Education said last night at Mr. Seymour’s meeting with his constituents, the Cayman Islands needs all hands on deck.

I am therefore reiterating her call for anyone else on the Opposition bench who may wish to join us as we continue to make a real difference in the lives of our people.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**The Speaker:** I have been notified by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that he would like to make a short personal explanation.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town East:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate your indulgence with this.

Mr. Speaker, when we were here on Monday, you specifically asked me, had I received the email with regard to the presentation of the budget address. I indicated that I had not, and Mr. Speaker, I was wrong—it was sent to me about 9:20pm on Saturday evening to my Parliament address, which is one that I do not use. Just for the record, I wanted to let Members and the public know that I had, in fact, received it.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much and I think it happens to several of us; I know it happens to me. The email goes to the government and I do not use government, I use my personal email. Thank you very much for your explanation.

The Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for Bodden Town East.

**Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Parliamentary Secretary to Housing, Labour and T&T, Elected Member for Bodden Town East:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I beg your indulgence to respond to the Honourable Premier’s kind words.

**The Speaker:** You may; yes, you may.

**Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour:** Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Today marks an important milestone in my life as I transition from the Opposition to the Government bench of this honourable Parliament.

I am very thankful this morning and I want to say good morning to the people of the Cayman Islands and, in particular, Bodden Town East.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, thank God we survived another hurricane season. It has officially ended, praise God, today being December 1<sup>st</sup>. Also, please keep in your prayers Ms. Joan Frederick, Ms. Mae Berry and Ms. Eulalee (UNVERIFIED)—all seriously ill, some had to be flown off the Island. Let us pray hard; and I remember, Mr. Speaker, **1 Thessalonians, 5:16-18: “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks, in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”**

We are living in a time where much is negative, Mr. Speaker—much jealousy, malice and envy. As a nation, we need to be more appreciative, complementing and grateful to each other, for where we have come.

I want to thank the Honourable Premier for his kind comments this morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much.

I can only look around the world and notice what appreciation looks like; what it really looks like. Even for those persons who were not born in their lands. There is a lady, some may know her by her stage name, Josephine Baker, who was born in America and moved to France at a tender age to become famous and loved by her second home. Many years after, she was given France’s highest honour and was inducted into the Panthéon and honoured as a hero.

We can look in our region, where Prime Minister of Barbados, Honourable Mia Motley just awarded secular R&B singer, Rihanna, who had moved to the United States to become a superstar; she was awarded the status of National Hero and was told to go “Shine like a Diamond.” Ladies and gentlemen, Members of Parliament, we also have to appreciate all, especially our own, and uplift them in any way we can.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the Progressives-led Coalition invited me to join their Government, but before doing so I called a public meeting to solicit the advice and support of my constituents in Bodden Town East.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, over the past week, Members on the Government bench, in particular the Honourable Chris Saunders, Deputy Premier, and the Honourable Jay Ebanks used this forum to publically call upon me to cross the Floor and join the Government bench. While this was crafty political manoeuvring, it was not a decision that I took lightly, nor one that I was willing to make without first going back to my constituents. As Members on both sides of this honourable Parliament know, this was not the first overture from the Government, but it was the first one in public.

As I do with all major decisions, I prayed fervently and sought advice from my committee and a few people who are very close to me. We all agreed that this was a decision that ultimately involved my constituents so, just as I did in 2017, I called a special public meeting last night, 30<sup>th</sup> November.

Mr. Speaker, it is noteworthy to mention that I called every single Member on the Opposition bench and spoke to them personally about my decision-making process, and the fact that I was calling a public meeting. At this meeting I laid out the facts to my constituents and the wider country, as the meeting was carried live on social media and Radio Cayman.

Additionally, several Members of the PACT Government spoke to the people of Bodden Town East, namely, the Honourable Premier, Wayne Panton; the Deputy Premier, Chris Sanders; Honourable Minister Juliana O’Connor-Connolly; Minister Kenneth Bryan; Minister Jay Ebanks and Parliamentary Secretary and Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Kathy Ebanks-Wilks. Each and every one of them made an impassioned plea and laid out a powerful argument for me to come and join the Government’s bench.

Mr. Speaker, while all of that was flattering and appreciated by me, the final decision was still one that I would only take with the blessings of my constituents, the people of Bodden Town East. I can report to this honourable Parliament that my constituents of Bodden Town East in attendance, offered unanimous support for me to join the Government bench. Further, I can say that I have received over 200 WhatsApp messages and all of them, except one, supported me joining the PACT Coalition Government.

Mr. Speaker, that brings [me] to a very important point and I must state for the sake of history and posterity and that is, that I am an independent Member of this Parliament. I am not, I repeat, I am not a Member of any political party.

As I did last night, let me further state for the record, my sincere appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity afforded to me, a boy from Gun Square by the Progressive-led Coalition to have served as Minister in Cabinet from 2017 to 2021. I have forged a life-long friendship from this, and I thank you all.

Today marks a new journey for me and my people of Bodden Town East, Mr. Speaker. Let me say that I am excited to offer my experience to the PACT Coalition Government and the people of the Cayman Islands. In me you have a loyal and experienced Member of Parliament, and a man who is interested in the good governance of these beloved Islands.

The election are seven months removed. It is time to make Cayman the very best for Caymanians to move and have their being. It is time to inspire the next boy or girl from Gun Square to imagine and live all the possibilities our country has to offer. It is time to get on with living with COVID-19. It is time to make education great; to fill the housing gap; to employ all willing and able Caymanians; to solve the traffic nightmares of the

eastern districts; to provide quality healthcare; to make NAU more accessible to the vulnerable; to ensure no child is hungry in school (you cannot learn on the hungry belly); to safely bring back tourists; to ensure the Development Bank is a tool for progress; to ensure food security; to build sustainability; to ensure “Mount Trashmore” is a thing of the past; to provide better services to our elderly; to provide more opportunities for budding entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, I am a worker, I have accepted this call to work for the greater good of all Caymanians and proudly represent Bodden Town East. It is so easy for me to do well because I am so unassuming that many do not expect much. My bar is so low that I always overachieve, if I must say.

When I was in High School, no one thought I could run and I ended up being one of the fastest boys on the Island. When I was playing with Bodden Town Football Club, I sat on the bench a lot and ended up scoring the winning goal for Bodden Town’s first FA Cup. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to have faith in our people. Just give them a chance.

You see, Mr. Speaker, me standing here is not a political strategy; it is not pursuit of power; it is not promotion of self. It is not the result of any negotiation. Dwayne Stanley Seymour is standing here to serve the people of Bodden Town East and because of the will of the Almighty God who reigns supreme in the affairs of man.

Once again I thank my wife, my mother, my entire family, my committee, the people of Bodden Town East and all well-wishers; without you all, I cannot do anything. I thank all the persons who messaged and called me; most people said, *whatever you think is best for Bodden Town East, I am with you or I support you*. Mr. Speaker, these are the people who elected me. They hold my job. I have to listen to them.

I thank you all so kindly. I thank all the Members of this honourable House, especially the PACT Government for being so receptive.

I thank you all and God bless you.

[Desk thumping]

## OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

## RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BILLS

## SECOND READING

### THE APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2022 AND 2023) BILL, 2021

(Continuation of debate thereon)

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, on Monday, after the Honourable Minister of Infrastructure, the Member for North Side’s, contribution to the debate, I called the customary three times and nobody rose. I want to say that it is not in the Standing Orders that we call three times; it is a customary, courtesy gesture by the Chair, and it is not done in other Parliaments.

As I must, after calling the third time, I called on the mover to close the debate. The Member for George Town North, I think rose; I still did not see him, but I gather that he had risen after I had called and while the Member for Bodden Town West, the Deputy Premier, was on his feet.

I said in the Members’ Room that I would not be calling beyond the three times, as I had called four times in this debate. I cannot go beyond that, Honourable Members, because then the Speaker would seem to be in parliamentary terms, “begging Members”, that is what it is used to do. The Speaker cannot beg Members to speak. It is the Members’ duty and preference if they want to speak.

I have been in the Government and in the Opposition, and I know what the waiting game is. No Member needs to try to fool this Speaker, ‘cause I nah just come ya, I understand the waiting game, but you got to be smart with it, if you wait too long then you out-wait yourself.

As I said, I spoke to Members that I cannot go beyond the three times and I will not. The Deputy Premier, graciously, gave way and said that he would allow the Member for George Town North to speak—that is a Member’s prerogative that this Chair can accept. At the same time, the Member for George Town North was moving out of the Chamber.

Honourable Members, at this time that invitation stands for any Member and once it is open, it is open, and so I hereby call: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Member for George Town North.

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town North:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House I was not playing games on Monday evening. Perhaps a little slow to my feet, but I was not. I was actually quite pleased that several of the Ministers, in particular the first-time Ministers, spoke—and spoke very well if I must say so—on their plans for the upcoming two years. I spoke to some of them after we almost shut down the House at lunch and said to them, do not let this opportunity escape you.

When I look back, one of my proudest moments was my first budget debate as a Minister and I would hate to have seen it escape them as well. It is something that you look back with and keep for posterity. There are YouTube videos of it; you have your transcripts. These are things that their children and their family will look at over and over and over again; and so I was very happy, and they can attest that I did speak to several of them individually to say do not allow this moment to pass you.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the Member for Bodden Town East and wish him well as he joins the ranks of the Government.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** That, I guess, fills all the seats and completes a United Democratic PACT.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** In short, “UDP.”

I also want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Governor for his Throne Speech and for his continued and often over-and-above support to our Islands and its people.

Mr. Speaker, I was eagerly anticipating what is usually an exciting, and inspirational Budget and Policy statement, however, I felt that what was delivered by the Premier on Friday was far from that, but rather, the Premier painted a picture of doom and gloom with a promise of hope.

I was happy, however, to hear a slightly different tone from the Minister of Finance who spoke of building on foundations. He reminded me, Mr. Speaker—I know you often said that I skipped Sunday school—of a song about a wise man building his house upon the rocks.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** And I am glad that the Honourable Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier saw the wisdom, or perhaps he too, remembered the song and will build upon the solid foundation that this Administration left behind. However, Mr. Speaker, I do share some concerns [as] those echoed by the Leader of the Opposition. In particular, on the level of borrowing.

The Honourable Premier stated in his contribution that many hard-working business owners and employees found themselves one medical bill or one pay cheque away from financial ruin. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that this near-billion dollar budget; this \$350 million borrowing with a mere \$8.5 million surplus in

2023 is, Mr. Speaker, exactly what the Premier described as being one medical bill or one pay cheque away from financial ruin.

Mr. Speaker, I pray that the Government reconsiders this open cheque-book policy and does not just disregard us and say, ‘*I’ve got this*’, because if they do not [reconsider], Mr. Speaker, our children and our grandchildren will have the financial burden of the borrowing. That is almost \$12,000 per person, Mr. Speaker; yes, that is what \$350 million divided amongst 30,000 Caymanians equals to.

During the last period, when our Administration boasted large surpluses, there were calls from the Opposition, “*Why are we holding on to the people’s money? Spend it on them!*” I heard it several times. Our response always was, that you have to save for a rainy day and may I say, Mr. Speaker, and as the Premier said, COVID-19 was a Cat 5, not just a rainy day. I pray that this is not the philosophy of this Government, Mr. Speaker. It sounds good but it is killing the goose for the golden egg.

I pray daily, that this is not the case, but Mr. Speaker, I do believe we have many more rainy days ahead of us. New COVID variants, increased costs in shipping which we are heavily dependent upon; food shortages meaning increased costs; increased fuel prices meaning increased utility bills; shortage of vehicles around the world which means difficulty for persons to attain transportation; this is where we need to be focusing, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to take this opportunity to clarify some comments made by the Honourable Premier. When he made mention of the LCCLs, now called the LCCA, Local Company Control Act waivers, being the norm. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Premier was the Minister responsible for the Trade and Business Licence or the Department of Commerce and Investment from 2013 to 2017 and he did a fantastic job.

I remember sitting as a Member of the Caucus and as a Councillor back then—what is now a Parliamentary Secretary—debating the waiver of an LCCL for contracts to build the airport. Our Government, under some counselling and the advice of the now Premier, decided that we would not wave the LCCL for that company to operate at the airport. What we decided, was that we would waive advertisement for Caymanian participation. That was the policy moving forward.

Mr. Speaker that policy continued to waive advertisement for publicly traded companies, for example. Some vehicles that were operated by the banks to move funding or perhaps family practices, where it would be impossible to have a local partner. That was a policy that continued under my four years. I am not aware of any waivers of LCCLs.

Mr. Speaker, I will say, that some of the policies created under the Honourable Premier and the 2013-2017 Progressive-led Government served us very well. I continued the incentives started under his watch, as he said, “building on foundations”; and I took it a step

further, Mr. Speaker, by removing almost 60 per cent of the red tape for Caymanians to receive a Trade and Business Licence—and I hope it does not creep back. We went 100 per cent online.

Mr. Speaker, these efforts saw an increase in Trade and Business licences for Caymanians. In 2020, we saw an increase of 23 per cent over 2019— an increase of some 605 Trade and Business licence applications. In the height of the pandemic, some 600 new applications were received between March 21 and June 17, 2020 showing a very strong local economy and removing barriers for Caymanians to live the dream of owning their own business.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the Government will continue with the UK-Cayman Climate Change Environment Partnership Agreement which I announced in November 2020 at the Caribbean Transitional Energy Conference which was held virtually. I also urge the Honourable Premier not to just discard all of the hard work and efforts made by the team at the Department of Planning on the Plan Cayman Initiative. I understand and I know that the Premier is determined to review the National Planning Law for all three Islands, but Mr. Speaker, many Ministers before him and I have tried that since 1997, and failed. We came up with an idea to break Grand Cayman into five sections and review one section a year, revolving, therefore being in compliance with the Law and reviewing the entire Grand Cayman every five years. Staff in the Department put in a lot of work and a lot of time and the foundation is there.

It was a political campaign tool against me, saying that it was designed for the developers; but the plan is not complete. Just the outline case, the base document. It is ready to go to public consultation. It is ready to move and I encourage, and urge, the Honourable Premier and the Government to not just disregard all of the hard work, but to have a look at it closely.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a few [other] topics, one being the George Town Revitalisation. I am happy to see funding in there again. There was a lot of grunt work, if you want to call it that, or underground or base work done. Many drawings and designs; [For] the entire centre of George Town, all of the utilities have now been mapped so we know where everything is around the town—every wire, every line, every light pole, every water pipe. That took a long time and a lot of money; there was a lot of work put into the George Town Revitalisation that got us to this point, and I am happy to see funding in the budget and I look forward to hearing more about what the plans are.

I am also happy to hear that the Planning Minister intends to remove some of the red tape from Planning. I wish for him all the success and I assume he has the Honourable Deputy Governor behind him perhaps; and it seems as if he may need the Honourable Attorney General, as he has a few lawsuits being filed against the Central Planning Authority (CPA), but perhaps he

will be conflicted in those, since they are from government agencies as well, but I do wish the Member all the best in continuing to streamline and continuing to create efficiencies within the CPA and, in particular, the Planning Department. Again, if there is any help I can give to him, I am happy to do so.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I also want to thank the Minister for continuing the road work projects that were started under my Administration. I will not go into the details of them; it is not about who is doing them, I think these are one of these things that we all sit in traffic, we all suffer from it and we all want to see it resolved.

I would only encourage the Minister to continue to fight for the complete streets philosophy or the shared streets where you can. If we are going to lower our carbon footprint; if we are going to reduce traffic, it cannot be just from building roads. We have to encourage and make it safe for persons to use bicycles, scooters or walk—or jog and exercise if you want to keep COVID away as well. It is the future. All of the hotels have put bicycles outside for their guests to ride. There are two scooter companies on the Island that you can pick up a scooter anywhere; and I see people using them, but some of our roads are just outright dangerous for it. I have known a couple of people that have wiped out on the scooters from hitting potholes. Between potholes and no shoulder space or no bike lanes and no traffic calming devices, in particular along the Seven Mile Beach Corridor, where we have heavy foot traffic, heavy bicycle traffic, people exercising, people using the scooters for transportation.

Like I said, we saw, during the lockdown, when there were no cars on the road, the number of people exercising. I often jog—well, before I broke my ankle—I would jog along West Bay Road, and it actually got frustrating [because] there were so many people jogging. You had more traffic jogging than you did driving, but we have to create the environment for people to:

- a) Be healthy; get out there, ride a bicycle, run, walk; and
- b) Create the environment for persons to choose alternative forms of transportation.

That is the shared road, if [it is] not possible to do the complete streets. Again, I offer my full support to the Minister on that.

**Hon. Johany S. “Jay” Ebanks, Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side:** Thank you, sir.

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I also want to congratulate the Minister on the 33 new apprenticeships in the Public Works Apprenticeship Programme which can now house 33 because of



the purpose-built building constructed under my time as Minister responsible for Public Works.

I heard the Minister when he spoke about expanding or perhaps changing the programme a bit. I will say this to the Minister and I will say it publicly: The key to the success of that programme are the amazing mentors who guide the young men and women at the Public Works Programme. Do not remove that.

Many would not show up—many of the students would not show up, if not for some of the mentors going to their house and saying, *put your clothes on, let's go!* That is a fact. So please, do not move away from that. That is the key to the success of that programme. It is the encouragement and the mentorship that is offered to those young men and women by senior members of the Public Works Department.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy for the reduction in fees for driver's licence, renewals, et cetera at the DV—Department of Vehicle and Drivers' Licence (DVDL); one thing you will all learn is that you will start speaking in acronyms and forget names but, I am happy to see that it has finally made its way through the Cabinet. That, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, was a part of our Elderly Persons Policy that was created by this Administration as well. Let us continue to support that policy. Let us continue to push for changes; for a new regime for our elderly. They deserve it. They deserve the respect. They deserve all the help that they can get. They have done their part in building this amazing country, so let us do our part in supporting them.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the Minister, the Ministry and the Department for their transition to the online platform. It has been difficult; there were many, many obstacles in their way that were outside of their control, including obtaining proper service for the Department. I am happy to know that it is moving forward and would like to congratulate all involved for realising some successes and continuing that programme.

I also want to congratulate the Ministry on continuing with Phase II of the Department of Vehicle and Equipment Service's state of the art, dry and safe facilities that are worthy of human beings to work in. The first phase, which we completed during my tenure, was the Administration block and the Stores.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Premier quite often teased me about my height, but when I toured that administration building, I had to duck to go through some of the doors.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I do not know how those folks worked in those conditions for so long, but again, I thank the Minister for continuing. Now I see that the progress which started with us continues on, and I hope it continues into Phase III. The base for the large vehicles, the electric vehicles, is just about completed it looks like. Congratulations to all who were involved in that as well.

Mr. Speaker, with all that I just said I want to congratulate the Minister, for following the Sunday school song and continuing to build on a strong foundation—not on the sand, but on the rock.

Mr. Speaker, near and dear to me, and I hope that perhaps, the Minister will get up and speak [on it], or perhaps we will hear more during the committee stages, is the Small Business Development Centre. I hope it continues to do what it was developed for. I keep in touch with some of the clients in the Incubator/Accelerator Programme. Fantastic stories of success there.

I hope the Government sees the (Return on Investment) ROI in it. There is a lot of talk about investing in people, and I think this certainly fits the old adage of, *don't give a man a fish but teach a man to fish, and you will feed him forever.* I understand the role that the Cayman Islands Centre for Business Development plays in this pandemic, but I do not and I wish not, that that centre just becomes an ATM dispensing money.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Government for continuing the digital ID Programme. This is a tremendous step; if we had had the digital IDs in place when the pandemic hit us, it would have made so many things easier and that is what drove me to really push to try and get the digital IDs in place. It's not something that you can go and put your name on a plaque and put it up in the wall to say you did it, but it is something that is important for the future of this country and not just for the Government, but also for the economy.

It is the foundation and the first step for digitalising our economy and for assisting the financial sector and hopefully one day, along with these wonderful papers here, everything will be digital and we will not have to chop down so many trees just to change your name or something on a document.

That is the modality that we have to adopt. If we are going to stay leaders in the world, we have got to get up to speed, and I hope and wish that the Government keeps this at pace, but also continue to pressure the financial institutions to get their infrastructure, and to invest in their systems, so that when we are ready to launch, we can see the real benefits of the digital ID programme.

The submarine cable, Mr. Speaker, fits right in with that, and I want to congratulate Members of the Special Economic Advisory Council that I formed during the pandemic, for the research and hard work that they put in; many hours, at a time when they could have been busy doing other things. Volunteers that supported and provided help in getting us to where we were with the submarine cable.

A young man in the government who came out when he did not have to—Mr. Miguel Jakes. I want to congratulate him in getting to this stage, as I see some Request for Proposal (RFPs) going out. I hope he is still

involved; I hope he receives the support that he deserves, and I want to congratulate him on his vision and the work that he put in on the submarine cable.

Mr. Speaker, I am also extremely happy to hear the Minister of Tourism supporting many of the hotel projects that started under my term. In fact, the Minister of Finance named the very same projects as key contributors to the finances of this government and its ambitious agenda. I, along with many in the community, felt real fear and concern that the PACT Government intended to put a halt to such development. However, I guess, Mr. Speaker, it became clear the importance of the jobs that these developments provide; the importance of the revenue that these developments will contribute to the government coffers in order for us to build community centres; in order for us to build parks; in order for us to protect lands.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say that yes, I am the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Yes, I guess I am a politician and yes, Mr. Speaker, I am a representative of the people, but I am also a Caymanian with family, with children, hopefully one day with grandchildren, with businesses. I am personally—personally, Mr. Speaker—and financially, invested in this country and so Mr. Speaker, it is important for me, not just in my capacity as a Member of this Parliament for this Government to succeed, but it is important for my family, for my children, my grandchildren in the future, for my businesses, and so I urge the Government to do as the Governor said: proceed with prudence and caution, so that we—not *we*—our children and our grandchildren, will not be saddled with the burdens and the debt of our decisions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak? The Member for George Town West caught my eye first. The Member for George Town West.

**Mr. David C. Wight, Elected Member for George Town West:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Anything formed through hatred or revenge will never be successful.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution to the budget debate, but I will take a different approach.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, there is something on my mind that has been bothering me and I think we need an explanation and there is no blaming or any fault of anyone, because I do not know, I just need to find out where the problem lies, and see if we can solve this problem; but in doing so, I want to say that I have never been one who will boast of my personal achievements. I will never, never brag, but in laying out what I want to say, I have to list a few accomplishments that I have done and this is involving sports.

As everyone knows, our family has been heavily involved in sports over the years. We have been especially involved in cricket, and this goes back deeply because my grandfather—my father's father—was selected to represent the West Indies Cricket Team on the 1930-31 tour of Australia. That passed on through our father into his children. He formed the Buy-Rite Sports Club and I proudly have to admit that the Buy-Rite Cricket Team became one of Cayman's most successful sports teams. We went 19 years as champions and we were undefeated for 15 of those 19 years. The Police Team of the 70s were always our arch enemy and they were what drove us to what we became.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note and this is what I am saying about listing a few achievements. My brother Christopher and I, and the AG would know about this, played for a top Jamaica Senior Cup Team, Melbourne Cricket Club in the 90s. Christopher and I went away as semi-pros in the Central Lancashire League and the Lancashire League.

We had the Cricket Crazy Weekend here in Cayman, and they were all personal achievements and great memories that meant a lot to us personally, but Mr. Speaker, our greatest achievements were when we were representing Cayman in any tournament. That is when we had our national pride and that was what we looked forward to. We did well locally, and when we were playing for Buy-Rite our Father rewarded us with trips overseas, and that was our only chance to get some overseas competition.

When I say that we were involved in all types of sports, your driver, Mr. Graham Rankin, he always comes to us and asks us to push our brother Michael to get some award because Michael is the only person in Cayman that has represented Cayman in five different sports. We were involved in all sports. As I said, we only played locally and we enjoyed cricket and we love cricket and it was through the passion for cricket that we were involved with Buy-Rite.

In 1997, we hired a technical director, Mr. Theo Cuffy, to try to take cricket to another level. In 1998, we were awarded Affiliate status by the International Cricket Council (ICC). In 2002 we were awarded Associate status by the ICC. This allowed us to get funding from ICC, which we put towards developing cricket in the schools and a lot of praise has to go to Mr. Andy Myles, also known as Kisco, for what he did in the schools. Through him, we were able to develop a Youth Programme that forwarded cricketers into the national team and that is where everybody's ambition is: to play for the national team.

Mr. Speaker, from 1998 when we represented Cayman as an Affiliate Country, and in 2002 as an Associate Country, as a country we have been involved in every ICC America's tournament until this year. A tournament just finished in Antigua two weeks ago, the regular five countries: USA, Canada, Bermuda, Argentina and Bahamas were there. Cayman was missing, but they had two new countries, Belize and Panama. If

those countries could go and perform in Antigua, why was Cayman not there? When you miss an ICC-sanctioned tournament, you will always have problems getting invited again. We missed this tournament.

As I said, we as young players looked forward to playing for the national team. If we do not have this chance to represent Cayman in these ICC tournaments, what do the people have to look forward to? This is worrying, because we have been receiving calls and have had visits from cricketers who are very concerned. I know the former coach, Christopher and I, we made friends over the years with people from Bermuda, Canada, USA who we played against. We got calls from them asking how it is that Cayman was not represented at this tournament.

I am not blaming anybody, because we tried to find out what the problem is and we are getting the run around and different answers everywhere we go so I am just putting it out there. We want to save cricket for the younger generation coming up; and not make "Kisco's" (Andy Myles') hard work go in vain, so I am just asking if we can find a way to find out what stopped this from taking place. I will move on Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just over four and a half years ago I was approached by the Progressives who asked me to stand as their candidate for the District of George Town West. Through all my involvement with politics, I had never really had an interest to put myself forward as a candidate but rather, I would actively support candidates whom I trusted and believed in.

I consulted my family and close friends to seriously consider all the implications of putting myself forward. It would be a great challenge and would bring big responsibilities, but we agreed that I would get criticised and I would receive them anyway if I were elected. The main thing that came out of my meeting with them was that if I remained strong to myself, I remained honest, they would back me and support me 100 per cent.

If I believe in something, and no one has been able to show me that I am wrong, I can only stand up for my belief. By speaking out honestly on what I believe, and not being hypocritical in my positions, my family and close friends will continue to trust in me and support me in any way they can. Some people may even disagree with some of my positions or things I may say but they know I take these positions and say these things because that is what I believe and stand for. All agreed that as long as I continue to stand for what I believe in, they will support me 100 per cent. They know that I am not acting with any ulterior motive and they are able to trust that my stance is not based on any hypocritical reasons and is only based on my honest belief of any situation.

Mr. Speaker, I did not run to make any decision to become popular. If I did what I did and somebody did not like me, it is no problem, but I was not going to compromise myself and my belief to do something to make anybody like me. I am proud to say that my family and

close friends have supported me 100 per cent, and I still ask and receive important feedback when I am making big decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I was successful in my first attempt as candidate for George Town West and was successful when I stood for re-election. I believe and hope that this is largely because the people of George Town West know that I will never be hypocritical in an attempt to gain power and they can trust the positions I take, are based on my honest understanding of any position. I understand that being an elected Member of Parliament means that there will have to be some level of compromise on issues for the good of the country, but I will never compromise who I am and the principles I live by.

Mr. Speaker, from just prior to the 1984 elections, I had been deeply involved in Cayman politics. My parents raised me to care and take an interest in our community and always try and do something about issues we saw. Many Members of this honourable Chamber know that over the years I have always stood for and spoken out for what I believed in, and in many cases, this was to the detriment of me and my family.

Christopher and I were known to get on the radio show to speak our minds on issues we were concerned about. Over the years, I have spoken out against some of the positions taken by Members of this honourable Parliament and criticised those political actions I disagreed with. Many times this brought criticism and disagreement on me, and sometimes this became very heated. While I will never claim that my positions and beliefs are always right, I will always stand for my right to hold and speak these beliefs.

Fear that I might possibly be wrong does not stop me from holding and putting forward my positions, and I accept [that] I must bear the disagreement from others and sometimes be corrected, but I believe that by airing my concerns, I give everyone the opportunity to give their positions on the topics that lead to a more knowledgeable community.

It was an honour to be elected and then re-elected to serve my constituency in Parliament. It was also an honour to be appointed as Councillor to two Ministries over my first term. It was a humbling and educating experience because it gave me insight into what it takes to run a country.

The budget process, Mr. Speaker, was one of the most important and difficult tasks we were involved in. It was amazing to see how much hard work and thought is put into this important function. As a Councillor for two Ministries, I saw what it took to prepare our part of the budget for the country. I stand here to say, that all of Cayman should be proud of the civil servants and the hard work and honesty they bring to the process.

Each Ministry presents its plans and requirements for the coming two years. The Financial Secretary and his team sit in on these presentations, and each request for funding has to be negotiated with the

larger available budget for the country. It is not possible to grant every request and each item has to be justified based on the need and the cost. This whole process is based on each party having full trust in trying to do what is best for the country and the Caymanian people.

My view is that the Premier has the final say after getting all the input from Government Members and the Financial Secretary, et cetera, and our Premier, he would not just jump off and make any decision, he would go along with what we suggest and what he feels is best. Ultimately, as I said, the Premier had the final say after all the discussions. This worked because we all had a deep trust that our Premier, and all those involved in the negotiations, were doing so with the honest intention of doing what was best for Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, over the years I have criticised many politicians, campaigned against many politicians and I have been criticised by many more. I have been part of parties where I supported politicians and eventually ended up campaigning against them; in other cases, I have campaigned against politicians, and ended up supporting them.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows how I campaigned against you for many years. I campaigned against you, I criticised you—and Mr. Speaker, I ended up working with you; but I am going to tell you Mr. Speaker, I have never in all the years that I criticised you and criticised former Members of Government, I have never, never, Mr. Speaker, said I would never work with you. I never did say that. I criticised you, I campaigned against you, but I never came out and said I would never work with you.

In 2017 when I saw what the Government wanted to do and you were going to become Speaker, I went along with it. I was not—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. David C. Wight:** Mr. Speaker, Christopher and I have been blamed for many things, some of which we were not responsible for, but through it all, I felt the need to speak on issues both for and against when I felt the need. I feel the need now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tell you, being on the Opposition is no problem for me. I am honoured to be elected. I am honoured to serve my people of George Town West and I think they are happy with me being their Member in Parliament—they re-elected me; but Mr. Speaker, if I do not trust somebody, that is bad. If somebody gives me their word and they break it, I am sorry, I cannot take your word again.

Mr. Speaker, I stood in a room after the 2021 Elections and I was given the word three times, “*you have my word.*” Three times, “*you have my word.*” That word was broken by the morning, and I do not know how I can really trust and I will get to my trust part, and that is why I am having an issue with the budget. I know they are Members of our Government and I have looked through it, and there are good things in this

budget—but promises were made before. Mr. Speaker that is just a trust issue.

We had a Member who was on their way to come to us, was side-tracked, and for some reason, after making promises to his people and different ones, he ended up somewhere else. That is politics. That is politics and, you know, that happens. I lose trust but that is politics.

Mr. Speaker, my problem is that I was raised in a very strict Christian family. We were warned against hypocrites. That is the main thing: I cannot trust a hypocrite. I do not want to go into it too much, but to be somewhere where there is a hypocrite, it gets to me that I am afraid. You do not know what they are going to do behind your back.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say...ah, boy.

Mr. Speaker, I sat in the Government for four years. There was a Member who was there with us. I remember the derogatory words. I spent four years being insulted. He does it as a joke, but it gets to you. I spent four years being told that I am eating my own vomit. My parents are turning in their grave because I was working with you. It gets to you when you go to—

I represented the current Minister for Education; when she was Sports Minister, I would go to functions and football programmes and we had foreign dignitaries come to Cayman and I am there and I am being told that I am eating my vomit and my parents are turning in their grave and it gets to me. It gets to me, but that is not hypocritical. What is hypocritical—and this is the thing that I cannot take... And I know they have noticed a change in me, but when a man or somebody can leave government, say very derogatory, nasty things about you; they refuse to work in a government that has so and so and so as a Speaker, and Mr. Speaker, just a few months later, the Member is over there on Government with you in the same position, Mr. Speaker.

How can I believe anything more, Mr. Speaker?

**The Speaker:** They had a good reawakening.

**Mr. David. C. Wight:** Reawakening, okay, but still, my trust and my belief in what they are putting forward...

Mr. Speaker, when you came back as the Speaker when we were Government, a motion was brought to this House, Mr. Speaker. It was seconded by a Member from the present Government. It was seconded by him wanting to get rid of you. Leading up to the elections, the same Member got on a TV talk show (and I still got it on my phone) [and], when asked if he would form a government with you, [replied]: “*I can answer that: absolutely not.*”

I may have been campaigning against you. I was never hypocritical with what I did. I never did say I would not work with you; but the most hurtful one, because I expected better, was when you came back Mr. Speaker, as Speaker of this House, there were two

Members of the Progressives, you know, they resigned from the Progressive party. There was a Progressive Office up by Countryside. The Progressive sign was torn down and a sign was put up, "She is supported" and you see, this is the part that really hurt me.

Leading up to the elections, one of those Members said, and I have it recorded, because I keep those. When asked if they would form a government with you, "Oh no, it is against my morals and my integrity; I would never do that." Well, I am totally disappointed, because now I am hearing that there is no morals and no integrity.

Mr. Speaker, I just had to get that off my chest because I know they have seen a difference in me; because, honestly, I cannot take hypocrites and if you are going to campaign... Mr. Speaker, I can look at it and this is my belief, nobody can take my belief from me; in the lead-up and all the campaigning that went on to the elections, when these people were saying they would not form a government with you, how do we know that they were not elected by the people who had that in mind that they would not be working with you? And it is not a slight against you, Mr. Speaker, I am only talking about who said they would not work with you and they campaigned on that, right.

A month later, they are sitting in Government with you as Speaker, so when they are going to tell me now, that they have this great budget for the people... I know that we have some Members—and I have looked it over, they have good points—but they can say and promise anything. Promises were broken before, leading up to the elections. How do I know that this budget [that is] promised to the people will be delivered by that Government that has previously broken promises?

Anyway, I just had to get that off my chest because that is really hurting me, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** And you know that there were those on your side that said they were not working with me yet they were prepared to form the Government with me when they could not get a government formed. You know that, right?

**Mr. David C. Wight:** They were prepared to form a government with you?

**The Speaker:** Yep.

**Mr. David C. Wight:** So where are we now?

**The Speaker:** In the Opposition.

**Mr. David C. Wight:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Because I did not join. I just want to clarify something.

**Mr. David C. Wight:** Well, I don't know that. And let me tell you something—

**The Speaker:** You didn't know?!

**Mr. David C. Wight:** No.

**The Speaker:** Okay. [Laughter]

**Mr. David C. Wight:** And Mr. Speaker, can I be honest with you? If I know that a Member is saying that they would never work with you, and turn around and form a Government with you, I do not care what they say, if they say, "oh, I will form a government with him," but if they turn around and did it, I cut them off. It is as simple as that. That is my belief and nobody can take that from me. I did not know and I see them over here and I have not seen a Government formed with anybody from our side, so...

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I think I am going to ask you to move on, because I am tempted to answer you; and since it is about me, perhaps I will do so at another time.

**Mr. David C. Wight:** Mr. Speaker, you see, you are getting that wrong; this does not concern you. You ran in the elections and you were duly elected by the people, right? You do not have a problem with that. They put your name forward as Speaker and you have every right to accept it.

I am talking about the people who campaigned that they would not form a Government with you. That is where my concern is.

**The Speaker:** I understand Member. You put it well. I just want to make you know that there were those on your side who said they would not work with me, and if I had joined you, then they would be working with me.

**Mr. David C. Wight:** Okay. I understand what you are saying. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who are proclaiming that this Government has done a good job in handling the COVID pandemic in Cayman. How can going from zero to over 4,000 cases in a few months before borders were even open, be considered a success?

While I do not claim to be a scientist or have all the answers, I did witness the incredible hard work, the Government of Unity, together with our civil servants, put into successfully managing the COVID pandemic. I know we made the best interests of the Caymanian people our top priority and made the difficult decisions even if they were not the most popular at the time. I believe that because of how we successfully managed the country over the previous years, the people trusted us and as a result, they played their part in successfully stopping the spread of COVID in our community.

We had a plan to move to the next stage of safely reopening our borders.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. David C. Wight:** As I said Mr. Speaker, I do not claim to be a scientist or have all the answers, but I will say what I believe. I believe that the change in quarantine time to five days was one of the major factors for COVID spreading as fast as it has done. Five days has no basis in science. We always understood that it could take between 10-14 days for the virus to show up after you have been infected.

It would have been better for this Government to have changed the quarantine rules to zero time and told the people that they would now be at risk from anyone entering our country who might have COVID. In doing that—and that is just a little extreme—the people would know, they had to protect themselves and take all precautions. Very similar to where we are now.

Government should have mounted an educational drive prior to taking that decision, to let the population know how to protect themselves and what precautions to take. They could have been honest with the people in letting them know that they would be at risk. We would then have known to take precautions. We all knew and understand that Cayman has to open its borders as soon as possible, and I think we understood there would be some spread when we did that; but to put us in a position where we continue to believe our Government was doing what was right for us and trust in their decisions, left us vulnerable and exposed to the spread of COVID and that is what has happened.

To go from the CDC rating for Cayman as a Level Three Low Risk country for COVID to being rated at Level Four, Very High Risk in a matter of months, is not good management of the pandemic. What is worse, is that this put the health and welfare of Caymanians at risk, so I do not agree that this Government has done a good job of managing the pandemic. Mr. Speaker, how can we trust this Government to make right decisions and policies in the future?

In finishing Mr. Speaker, Premier Panton used many words in his presentation in this budget session. That is his profession, and I am sure he is good at it, but it concerns me when it seems someone is trying to put labels on things.

During the Progressives time in government, our prime focus was on making things better for all Caymanians—not *my* people, but *all* Caymanians—with an emphasis on trying to provide help for any that needed help. We did not try to place people in certain categories. We definitely did not operate our Government under the guise of trickle-down economics. Our focus was simply to provide the best economic environment for all Caymanians. Mr. Panton now says he is pursuing a Middle-out Policy. The danger is that they will be focusing on one segment of our economy, possibly to the detriment of other segments.

I agree to help those within our society who need help, but to limit that help to a particular segment is not right. Putting labels on segments of our society will also have [the] unintended consequence of beginning to form a warfare of class where one segment is

played off the other for political gain. We have seen this play out in countries across the world, and it only tears those communities apart.

Mr. Speaker, a successful Government needs its people to trust in what they are doing. Some may not agree with my position, but I have to say what I believe. Given all that has taken place how can I, or the Caymanian people, have trust that this Government is doing and will do what is best for Cayman and all Caymanians? Time will tell, but at this stage they will have to work hard to earn our trust and confidence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]*

The Member for George Town South.

**Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Elected Member for George Town South:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I deliver my contribution, I would like to thank the Honourable Premier and his PACT-Government for the kind invitation to join them on that side. I want them to know that I am quite happy here on this side with my official Opposition, but thank you for the invitation in any event. Moving on to my speech.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to deliver my contribution to the 2022/2023 Budget Address and Throne Speech. My contribution will focus on education and social development. I will speak firstly to Education.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, said in his speech, in response to the Premier's address to the House, we are reassured that education has continued as a top priority for the PACT Government. We have taken comfort from the reappointment of the Honourable Minister for Education. The Honourable Premier, when he made that appointment, suggested it was an important signal of continuity and the actions that she has put in place since are a clear continuation of the policy agenda that she and I were working on through the last Administration.

It is vital that this continuity remains, Mr. Speaker. We cannot return to the Stop/Start changes in policy direction that have marked previous transitions to a new government. All that has done is to condemn successive groups of students to suffer, while abrupt switches and direction were implemented. The country needs to maintain continuity in education policy because that policy has seen improvement begin to take roots across Cayman's public schools.

The first Progressives-led Government of 2013 to 2017 did the groundwork. It carried out baseline assessments of our schools, and modernised the restrictive legislative framework that was holding back change. It began the improvement journey that the

Honourable Minister continued so ably during the 2017/2021 Administration.

The Minister delivered the introduction of the modern curriculum that challenges our students to achieve. She oversaw investment in improving the quality of teaching that lies at the heart of raising standards. She laid the groundwork for a new model of school governance and local accountability that will support future improvement. She led the delivery of the new John Gray High School campus and expansion to the classroom and sports facilities across the Primary School estate.

Most importantly, as part of the last Progressives-led Government, Mr. Speaker, the Minister demonstrated that real improvement could be delivered in Cayman's public schools. The last round of Public School inspections, carried out as we left office found improvement in all three of Cayman's High Schools with two of them; John Gray and Layman Scott, now being rated as "Good." That is the minimum standard we should expect of all of our public schools. The progress achieved to date shows that with continued support from the Ministry and, more importantly, continued determination and effort by those teaching on the front line, it is a standard we can achieve; but our ambition and plans when in government, were to go beyond good to excellent.

Mr. Speaker, we heard both the Premier and the Finance Minister's say promising words about their continued commitment to education and the future success of our young people. As I said, I appreciate that and commend them. I hope and trust that they will provide their full support to the Minister so that she can continue with the successful programmes begun when the Minister was a Progressives Minister of Education.

At the last election, we on this side of the House, were proud to put before the country, a track record that we knew created a platform for future success. Therefore, we were able to make a very specific pledge to the country at the election that all public schools would be "good" or better by the end of this term. Mr. Speaker, we knew it was ambitious but achievable.

The Minister and I both stood behind that pledge in April when we campaigned together. That must be the minimum ambition that the government should aim for and as I have said, our ultimate ambition was to move from great to excellent. The platform is firmly in place, the Government is saying the right things, but ultimately, the country needs to see achievement, not just hear warm words.

Is the PACT-Government willing to match the ambition and determination that we have on this side, and give a specific pledge that all public schools will be rated "good" or better by the end of their term in Office? I hope they are willing to make that pledge. More than that, Mr. Speaker, I hope they are willing to display the fortitude necessary to deliver on it. As the Leader of the Opposition said earlier in the debate, the Government

can count on our support as it pursues the continuation of the policies we established, particularly with regards to education.

For example, I welcomed from the outset the enhancements to the various scholarship programmes that the Minister announced, which support Caymanian students in their progression and for which funds are provided in this budget. With an eye on the future of education, the increases in funding available for those wishing to pursue teaching qualifications via education/teaching scholarships, is particularly important.

Improving the quality of teaching is the most important contributor to raising standards in education. That starts with being able to attract the best and brightest of our young Caymanian talent into the teaching profession. The scholarship funding increases are a welcome initiative in moving us in that direction, and I thank the Minister for continuing the policy direction that we worked on together over the last four years in that respect.

However, the support we offer to the Minister will not be unthinking and therefore, may not be uncritical. Even where we share the same objectives, we may disagree on the details of how to get there. Therefore, as we go through the detailed budgets in Finance Committee, I will clearly point out any areas in which this PACT-Government is falling short or where we believe there are better ways to achieve our common goals.

One such area, Mr. Speaker, is the free school meals policy. Again, this was something we were working on towards the end of the last administration and I support the declared intent of ensuring that students in public schools benefit from the nutrition that can support effective learning. My concern is with the universal provision of meals that the Government has embarked upon, but I will say more about that when we get to the appropriate budget line in Finance Committee and more details are available.

For now, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise three more strategic concerns that do not fall neatly into budget lines for debate in Committee. Each is highly significant if we are to push forward towards the successful and flourishing public education system that we all want to see for Cayman's young people.

The first is the need for a comprehensive Government-wide strategy for early years' development. I am pleased to hear about the expansion of nursery provisions that the Government has spoken about, and I support it. Under the last Government, in September 2019, the Department of Education Services introduced the Pilot Nursery Programme for three year olds at Creek and Spot Bay Infant School.

As was intended, the evaluation of that Pilot Bill no doubt will inform the Minister's decisions about future provisions. The pilot's focus on the emotional and social development of young children was crucial to its success, however, this must not be left as a single initiative; it needs to be part of a proper strategy for early

years development. Such a strategy needs to address support for families, and not just provide more places in schools.

All available international evidence highlights the central importance of early years' development to a child's subsequent learning and future achievement. We do not want to see government taking over the responsibilities of parents, but we all know that many families need help and support.

Initiatives such as the announced Parental Leave can play a part in the kind of strategy I envisaged, Mr. Speaker, but without a comprehensive approach, the effectiveness of these one-off actions is limited, so I hope that the Minister and the Premier will commit to this honourable House, and to the country, that they will bring forward a comprehensive cross-government strategy for early years' development.

My second concern is about the Government's plans for the delegation of responsibility for school improvement to the schools themselves or rather, the apparent lack of such plans. I know that the last Progressives Administration was committed to seeing through such a programme of delegation of responsibility. There are clear benefits to be achieved in terms of freeing up schools to drive their own improvement; enhancing accountability through local governing bodies; and freeing up government itself so it can focus on driving the necessary national initiatives like the new curriculum, and provisions for complex special needs education.

The implementation of the plans we had was delayed first, because the Minister correctly prioritised the new curriculum as priority one and then because of COVID. We know, however, that an almost complete programme had been developed by the Education Council, in which I had the honour of serving as a Member, and that it was ready to be implemented. From what I can recall, the pilot sites had also been identified.

The delivery of a new governance model was mentioned in the SPS documentation, but we have heard little about it since from either the Premier or the Minister. Why not, Mr. Speaker?

I hope that that commitment given to delegating power and responsibility to the schools themselves, making schools directly responsible and accountable for the success of students under their charge, has not been watered down. These are important and necessary education reforms, Mr. Speaker. Can I therefore ask either the Minister or the Premier to reassure the House of what plans they have for the implementation of new governance arrangements for public schools and what is the timetable for action to be taken?

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight my concern about the use of technology to support learning. The SPS indicated that the Government would continue to invest in the roll out of technologies, giving students access to appropriate hardware in school and at home. This is another initiative of the Progressives-led Administration and I welcome its continuation, so I will

be looking to see that appropriate resources have been earmarked in the budget. However, my more strategic concern is different, Mr. Speaker.

The introduction of technology itself is only one side of the issue as to how we can support our students to learn effectively. The point is that the technologies are a gateway to new forms of teaching and learning. They are a support to, and not a substitute for high quality teaching in the classroom, therefore my question for the Minister is: How is access to new technologies being coupled with support to both teachers and students, to ensure that changes are made to classroom practice, which ensure that technology is used effectively to promote better learning outcomes?

Where the introduction of technologies has been successful in supporting the improvement of standards across the world, we know that it is because technology has been changing classroom practices and learning processes. Technology can be transformative in freeing the role of the teacher from being the sole deliverer of information, to a more complex role of negotiating learning objectives with students, providing a tailored support for individual students and encouraging reflection and classroom activities.

Students too, have developed vital new skills that equip them not just to succeed in education but in the future world of work. Those skills include using technology to search for and collate information and to publish and share their findings.

Mr. Speaker, these improvements do not happen just through making technology available. It takes more than that. The changes have to be planned and managed, most importantly, by supporting teachers to be able to create new learning environments. Therefore, it would be good to hear the Minister tell this honourable House how her Ministry is delivering the necessary changes beyond the delivery of hardware to schools and students.

I have raised some very specific questions for the Premier and the Minister in my remarks today, Mr. Speaker. I have done so not to try to catch them out but because I think there are key issues that need to be addressed if they are to deliver the improvements we all want to see in Cayman's public schools.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, a week ago Monday, my colleague and good friend from George Town West and I, in partnership with C3, installed a very high-tech Wi-Fi system at the park in Windsor Park. Mr. Speaker, this was one of the promises that we made to the people of George Town South and George Town West during our campaign, and I am pleased to say that it was delivered.

Mr. Speaker, having this Wi-Fi in the park will provide support for those young people and families who may not have Wi-Fi at home to allow them to access this service; to assist them with their homework or other school projects and a service which all of the residents of Windsor Park can take advantage of. I would publicly like to thank the management of C3 and their



team again for partnering with us on this most necessary service.

So again, Mr. Speaker, we are encouraged by what has been said about education by the Government so far however, whatever warm words the Government has to offer we on this side, and the entire country, will judge them by what they do and by what they achieve. Indeed, perhaps more correctly, on what our schools and our children do and what they achieve. Caymanian students deserve the best start in life that our public schools can give them.

Another reason for me to be so passionate about the Government delivering improvements in our public schools, is because I have a personal interest, as my two grandchildren are in the public school system; I want them to obtain the very best education—I want them to excel, Mr. Speaker. Let me share with you the experience I had with my eldest granddaughter in the Public/Private school system.

She attended [public] primary school from inception and when she was in Year 6 (her last year), her mother and I were a bit apprehensive about her going to the public high school, so her mother registered her into one of the private schools. From the get go, she was not happy. Trying to adjust from the public system to private, and having to meet new friends, the list goes on. She just would not settle. Every day she came home with some issue or the other, including the bullying issue. I can appreciate making that adjustment was difficult for her, Mr. Speaker. She just was not happy. She managed to make it through that year, and after much debate between us, my daughter decided to send her back to public school and Mr. Speaker, it was the right decision as she is one happy girl today, and is doing so well.

That is one of the reasons I am fighting for the reform of our public schools, Mr. Speaker. Cayman's public schools deserve the best support and the necessary investment that Government can give them, to ensure not only that our children attend school, but that they learn. An expression I once read succinctly made this point, ***“Schooling without learning was not just a wasted development opportunity, but also a great injustice to children.”***

This budget represents an opportunity for the Government to spell out exactly how it plans to continue to deliver the improvements that were begun by the last Progressives-led Government. The country has every right to expect the PACT-Government to deliver continued improvements in our public schools, Mr. Speaker. I am watching and holding them to account to ensure that they do just that.

Mr. Speaker, before I end my speech on education I want to share some exciting news. Last week, several of our news resources carried an article on two students who won the Spelling Bee Competition, and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate Layla Small of Red Bay Primary for winning the top primary spot at the Education Services Primary

Spelling Bee and Aleque-Benjamin Bennett of John Gray High School for winning the top secondary spot at the 38<sup>th</sup> Lions Club of Grand Cayman Secondary Spelling Bee Championships.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the challenges that our students experience on a daily basis with this pandemic, they continue to be resilient and make us proud. Again, congrats to these two students and also to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winners.

Mr. Speaker, I am moving on to Social Development and this one is a bit shorter, so I think I can continue before lunch. Are you okay with that?

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** Yes, okay.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** This one is only a couple of pages long.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** This last one on Social Development is not going to take long.

**The Speaker:** I intended to call the luncheon adjournment at 1:00pm.

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** Okay, sir. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** That would be good?

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

**Ms. Barbara E. Connolly:** On Social Development, Mr. Speaker.

The House has heard much from this side about the track record of successful delivery of the last two Governments. It is a track record we are rightly proud of and as we have indicated, it has created a platform for future success if this new PACT-Government has the wisdom to capitalise upon it. However, we on this side accept that there is one issue on which the last Government should have made much more progress. That issue is on the reform of social assistance.

Following the critical Auditor General's Report issued during the first Progressives-led Government, the last administration signalled its intent to get to grips with the changes that were clearly required in order to make the system fit for purpose.

The former Member for Prospect, as a Councillor at that time, took the lead on overseeing the necessary work on behalf of the Government. What he found was that the multitude of legislation that governs the approach to social assistance in Cayman was

hopelessly out of date. There was no consistency between differing laws over things like eligibility criteria for example, while some of the requirements placed on both the applicant and the staff dealing with them, were unnecessarily bureaucratic and cumbersome.

The start point for reform must, therefore, be a completely new legislative framework, Mr. Speaker. The former Member for Prospect was making progress with that massive task when the pandemic struck. Unsurprisingly, all the attention of the relevant civil servants in the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU) and elsewhere, was rightly focused on meeting the immediate need for relief, rather than on long term reform.

The work needs to be moved on, Mr. Speaker, as we find ourselves now getting clear of the crisis. I take heart from the reference in the Premier's remarks to the House that his Government would be bringing forward the required legislative changes. We in the Opposition will want to scrutinise the detail, but we offer our support for changes that will improve the effectiveness of the financial assistance regime.

The Premier mentioned the commitment and experience that the Honourable Minister for Investment, Innovation and Social Development brings to this issue; he was, after all, the Deputy Chief Officer of the Ministry responsible for Social Assistance. More importantly, his work record underlines his personal commitment to getting the best possible outcome for vulnerable Caymanian families. There is every reason to expect rapid progress now, Mr. Speaker.

Much of the work has already been completed and we have someone in charge who actually understands what needs to be done. It would be good for the Minister now to tell this House and to tell the country, not just that he wants to make improvements, but that he has a plan and a timetable for bringing forth the necessary legislation. We in the Opposition will work with the Government to make sure that the right reforms are being made and then to enact the changes as swiftly as possible.

While legislative change is necessary, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister well knows, it is not sufficient. The change in legislation will then feed through into new processes and systems within the NAU and elsewhere across government. This is a real opportunity to fundamentally shift our approach, to make it work much more efficiently and effectively.

When he was Premier, the Member for Red Bay described his Government's objective as "*to make sure that we got the right help to the right people at the right time.*" The implementation of a new legislative framework is the opportunity to achieve that objective. I am sure that the Minister knows all this, Mr. Speaker, but as a former civil servant himself, he will also be aware that the machinery of government has sometimes found it difficult to follow through and successfully implement change programmes.

That is not a criticism of our civil servants. We all know that when you have spent years doing things

in a particular way, it is very difficult suddenly to switch to a different approach. Investment is required in new information technology, in process improvement and in staff training and change management.

I ask one final question, Mr. Speaker: Can the Minister reassure the House that the budget before us provides the resources necessary to support the successful implementation of the legislative changes he will be bringing forward?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to thank my constituents of George Town South for their unwavering support, their encouragement, Mr. Speaker, and their love. I pledge to continue to serve them to the best of my ability, as I have done over the past four years, for the duration of this term. It has certainly been a privilege and an honour for me to be their representative, Mr. Speaker.

I thank you for this opportunity.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Members, we will suspend at this point and we will return at 2:15. Before we go, the Member for George Town West had much to say, and I want him to hear this for sake of your peace of mind.

*Hate no one, no matter how much they wrong you.*

*Live humbly, no matter how wealthy  
you become.*

*Think positively, no matter how hard life is.*

*Forgive all—especially yourself—and never stop  
praying for the best for everyone.*

The House is now suspended until 2:15.

**Proceedings suspended at 12:59pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 2:25pm**

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Proceedings are resumed.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]*

The Member for East End.

**Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, Parliamentary Secretary to HAYSCH and PAHI, Elected Member for East End:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this honourable Parliament: "The strength of the team is each individual Member. The strength of each member is the team." That is a quote by very successful NBA Coach, Phil Jackson.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise and speak as a Member of Parliament for the District of East End and the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure as well as

the Ministry of Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

I want to thank the Honourable Premier for his confidence in me to work as a Parliamentary Secretary in these two important Ministries. These appointments speak to the level of responsibility to which I have been entrusted. I want to assure him, my colleagues in the PACT-Government, and the people of these Islands, that his mission and charge will be carried out successfully.

I also want to express my appreciation to my Caucus colleagues for their support over the past seven months and remind us that it is our responsibility to ensure that the PACT-Government policies and programmes [as] set out in the Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) are successfully realised.

To my fellow Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, we have an opportunity during our term in this honourable House to deliver legislation relevant to our times and in keeping with the development needs of these Islands.

To my constituents of East End, my deepest appreciation for entrusting me to represent you in Parliament. I want to assure you that I have been working hard on your behalf in this Government. I will serve you with humility, commitment, and sincerity. It will be my honour and duty to work diligently to improve the human, social, and infrastructure needs in this very special and unique part of the island. The future of East End is bright.

Mr. Speaker, before I start my prepared contribution, I firstly want to say thank you to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, whom I know we can all agree, takes keen care and pride in our students or in her words, "my students." Her passion and dedication to the students and their future comes second to none, and I am proud to know that our students are supported by a Ministry led by a Minister with a heart such as hers.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that as one of the newest Members of this House, I have quickly grown to admire her attentiveness and stewardship. Under her leadership, the Government has already been able to provide every Primary School student with a laptop; that, of course, includes East End Primary School. These laptops not only assist our students with assignments, but have also proven critical in the Government's response to providing distance learning, especially now during a global pandemic. They also enable our most vulnerable students, who would otherwise not be able to access a laptop, to remain connected and stay learning. This has eased the burden on parents, enhanced the students' learning abilities and experience, and bolsters our commitment to future generations.

Aside from the laptops, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for acquiring facemasks and Lateral Flow Tests (LFT) kits that help keep our students and

teachers safe. To fulfil our undertaking in Broad Outcome Number One of the Strategic Policy Statement in this budget, as we have heard from the Minister of Finance, provides for what I mentioned earlier, plus funding for meals for every student in the Cayman Islands and again, Mr. Speaker, this includes East End.

Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the listening public, Broad Outcome Number One in the SPS is entitled "Improving Education to Promote Lifelong Learning and Greater Economic Accountability." Under this broad outcome, in points 1 and 2, the Government's investments in education will raise the standard of public education while easing the burden on families who are most vulnerable in our communities. That, Mr. Speaker, is people driven.

I will be working closely with the Minister for Development for a new Early Learning Centre and Pre-school for the Eastern districts that would better serve their needs, and I know that I have the Government's support for this. To the Honourable Minister of Education, on behalf of the students and parents of East End, thank you for all you do and continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, before I highlight the work that has been done in East End over the past few months and the improvements that are slated to take place over the financial year, I want to commend the Honourable Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Honourable Jay Ebanks, for all the hard work that has been accomplished collectively over the past few months under his leadership.

The Ministry has made much progress in a number of areas including:

- Supporting the agriculture sector to enhance food and nutrition security;
- Investing in young Caymanians through training and development programmes;
- Streamlining processes at our public-facing departments for greater efficiency and service delivery; and
- Improving the road infrastructure and progressing plans to develop our internet and telecommunications sector through investment of an underwater submarine cable.

As it relates to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, the PACT-Government, through this Ministry, has made a single most substantial investment of \$3 million in the agriculture sector to support farmers under the Tropical Storm Grace Farmers Assistance Project. Just a week ago, I had the pleasure of meeting some of these farmers when the Honourable Minister and I visited the Department of Agriculture and handed over checks to them to provide a relief for the loss and damage they suffered as a result of the storm in August.

One of the commercial farmers and recipient of the grant, Ms. Evelyn Rocket said she is, "*thankful to the Government for undertaking the initiative and for us placing priority on supporting local farmers.*" She stated

that, *“the assistance provided by the Government will put farmers in a position where one day they will be able to produce more food for our people to meet their dietary needs with the Cayman Islands less dependent on foreign food imports.”* [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

Mr. Errol Watler from Sparky’s Amazing Farm, located in my own district of East End said he is, *grateful to the Ministry and Department of Agriculture for the assistance provided and getting farms back on track as Tropical Storm Grace and the COVID-19 pandemic caused major setbacks for them.* Mr. Speaker, these farmers and many others, including East End farmers, are now able to get their farms up and running again.

It is our hope that through the Government’s Farmer’s Assistance Project, commercial farmers will be able to resuscitate their production and continue to strengthen their resilience, as they work to bolster our Island’s food nutrition security. I want to commend the Department of Agriculture for its work on this project, as well as the many other initiatives we do not hear much about in the media, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past months, the Agronomy Unit in the Department has hosted training interventions designed to boost technical capacity in the sector. They include Plant Propagation Training and Backyard Gardening Workshops in Cayman Brac, [both] aimed at stimulating interest in backyard gardening and growing produce with the possibility of expansion into commercial operations. Close to 60 people attended these workshops.

The unit has also conducted 250 extension visits, comprised of both visits planned to establish farmers and reactive visits to requests received from farmers and backyard gardeners. The Agricultural Health Inspection Services and the veterinary and livestock sections of the Department continues to be extremely active, with a focus on inspections of imported plants and products to safeguard the Islands from the introduction of imported pests and diseases, as well as training of five local veterinary clinics.

Mr. Speaker, while some made light of the recent matter of the escaped raccoons, it was through the efforts of the Department of Agriculture to recapture the animals, that we are able to unequivocally state that the Cayman Islands maintain its Rabies-free status. This is of utmost importance, as any change to this would not only pose a risk to human and animal populations, but would have significant implications as it relates to animal and human vaccinations.

Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we all support the Government’s Broad Strategic Outcome to strengthen the agriculture sector, the Ministry and Department of Agriculture are focused on the National Eggs Strategy, the Cayman Islands Food and Nutrition Security Policy and the Livestock Development Plan which support the Cayman Brac Stud Bull Programme and the Cattle Breeding Programme. Plans are also afoot for the Animal Bill, Plant Protection Bill, Pesticide Control Bill and the Agricultural Bill, which will provide the necessary

regulatory and legislative framework for a stronger agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, it would be of no surprise that as the representative of the largest farming district, I firmly support any assistance and support the Government can create and provide for our farmers. I understand just how important our farming industry is, and I wish to take the opportunity to publicly thank the Minister and the Department of Agriculture, ably led by Mr. Adrian Estwick, for their diligence in supporting our farmers.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to another strategic priority: Investing in and training young Caymanians.

In early September, I joined 50 young Caymanian men and women at the Level One to Level Three Trainees orientation session of the Public Works Department Apprenticeship Programme. I took the opportunity to encourage and remind them that this Government is working to give them as many opportunities as possible for them to succeed.

I want to commend the Public Works Department for stepping up to the plate by providing a medium through which Caymanians can develop craftsmanship skills to supplement the demand for a variety of technical and vocational areas important to the Islands. We are truly appreciative to those PW employees offering themselves to be mentors to the trainees.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, training is provided in areas where there is a scarcity of local qualified job applicants, such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical installation, welding, air-conditioning and refrigeration, as well as building and construction management. With increased opportunities in the construction and development sector at this time, it is in our interest to train and upskill generations of our Caymanian workforce [and so] I wholeheartedly support the Minister when he noted that he would be working with Mr. Michael Myles from Inspire Cayman to continue training the Caymanian workforce.

As the number of Caymanians seeking to enrol in the programmes grows, the Department is now working on plans to upgrade existing workshops to accommodate the delivery of other certification programmes. It is my hope, that during our term as Government, the number of trainees in the apprenticeship training programmes will increase to double the current numbers.

Turning to another subject area over the past months Mr. Speaker, the Department of Vehicle and Drivers’ Licensing has taken several steps to improve the delivery of services to customers. These include launch of a revamped website offering customers an easier way to access information and services and complete transactions online; increased online services, and other options for customers [such as] renewing and reviewing their driver’s licence online. Customers can also book appointments for written and driving tests, by calling the DVDL’s Customer Support Unit; eventually, all services will be fully online. This Government has been supportive of the Department’s agenda to improve customer service.

Mr. Speaker, the PACT-Government is also working to reduce the financial burden of specific groups that utilise the services of the DVDL. It has shown its commitment with the reduction in fees for motor vehicle registrations, vehicle licences, renewals, driver's licence applications and renewals for people 65 years and older. As was noted earlier in the House, we must take care of our ageing population, sir. As a government that respects and cares for its elders, it is our hope that this move will improve the wellbeing of our valued senior citizens.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to be part of a Government that is committed to continuing to invest in the road infrastructure of our Islands while actively seeking to find alternatives to solve our transportation and mobility challenges. Road infrastructure, traffic and housing are some of the pressing issues affecting my constituents in East End.

Traffic has been the number one concern of the residents of Grand Cayman, particularly for those people who commute from the Eastern districts—East End, North Side, Bodden Town, Savannah. I understand the difficulties and complaints from my people in East End; how this issue affects their quality of life. I want to reassure them, Mr. Speaker, that my Ministry and the Government, are working on solutions to address the challenges.

Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the Minister of Tourism and Transport also highlighted his desire to work on finding solutions to the traffic issues. It is also my intention to work closely with him, so that East End will benefit from these solutions.

The Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture and Infrastructure highlighted the main road infrastructure works being undertaken across Grand Cayman, but I want to reiterate those that are taking place or are in the pipeline, which will relieve traffic for those of us coming from the East. These include:

- Phase I of the East/West Arterial from Hirst Road going east to Woodland Drive. Expected to be completed by 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2022;
- Phase II of the East/West Arterial from Woodland to Frank Sound with an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) currently underway;
- Widening of Shamrock Road to 6-lane. This project is expected to be completed in the near future.

It is our hope, Mr. Speaker, that these improvements will address some of the issues we face and make our mornings and evening commutes to and from the East, more bearable. In addition to these projects, Mr. Speaker, the National Roads Authority (NRA) has other works planned, which will benefit the Eastern districts. These include:

- Shoulder works from Frank Sound Road Junction to Health City, which will add safety for both motorists and pedestrians;
- Survivors Road on High Rock Drive;

- Works to mitigate flooding in the low lying areas—includes Welcome Way in East End.

Over this financial year, the National Roads Authority will also be continuing with the Guardrail Programme, the Island-wide District Roads Improvement Programme and the Hot Mix Rehabilitation Programme. The Government has also given his commitment to repair and upgrade farm roads in East End with works to take place on the Farm Road leading to the long term mental health facility. I am very pleased with this move, Mr. Speaker, as it will be beneficial to our farmers—better access for production and distribution of their produce.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in many years, we have exciting projects coming online in East End with the support of this PACT-Government.

The first of these projects I will talk about, is the new Senior Citizens Home. I am pleased to announce in Parliament, and to my Eastern constituents, that one of PACT's first acts was to purchase acreage around the existing home, for the construction of a new facility for our seniors. The current facility was in such dire condition that the site had to be evacuated and residents were moved to West Bay. It had not been reoccupied since. Even if the current facility was to be upgraded and/or repaired, it is too small for the goals that we have, and wish to achieve, for the holistic care of our ageing population.

Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign I made it clear to my constituents that a priority for East End, should I be elected, must be to return our elderly to the district, so that they can enjoy their sunset years. However, Mr. Speaker, in working with the Minister responsible for Lands, I am happy that we are not just building a senior citizens' home, but we are actively planning for the rest of the property to be part of the first Affordable House Lot Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister will touch on this a bit more in her contribution, but I will say I am excited for the new sub-division that will give Caymanians, especially my people in East End, an opportunity to own a little piece of their rock at an affordable price. The development will have affordable house lots and many more amenities, including a new Public Beach and Community Centre in the immediate vicinity of the Senior Citizens Home. I will continue to work with Ministers and Ministries responsible for the rolling out of this programme, in early 2022.

To reiterate, the intention for the project is to integrate the following three land uses on the site:

- To construct a purpose-built Older Persons Facility with the provisions of 24-hour assisted care of the residents
- Provide a number of minimum assisted living homes for our senior citizens who are mobile and desire the advantages of being

close to care facilities and having structured visits by medical personnel

- A number of affordable house lots aimed at our first-time Caymanian buyers

Finally, to complement the aforementioned land uses, we aim to provide integration of green parks within the project that will be key to bringing the community together. These uses must be master-planned to promote the mixing of youth in our community being shaped by the older generations of our country. These aspirations can only happen when spaces are shared and occupied by a range of citizens; a mix of generations that talk to each other in person, which allows for the transfer of knowledge between them.

Mr. Speaker, turning to housing in East End. Since the start of this year, the National Housing Development Trust has undertaken a Housing Development Project in East End; seven more affordable homes are being built in the community already established at Will Jackson Drive.

The Trust is already in the planning phase for further projects, so I want to encourage young Caymanians, especially East Enders, to visit the housing offices to learn more, and sign applications for when more opportunities become available. These homes are high-quality, sustainable homes with energy-efficient features, granite countertops, wood cabinets, and porcelain floors that will add to the overall value.

I am encouraged that the PACT-Government is focused on providing more housing opportunities for our Caymanians, and I pledge to give my support to the Minister and his team at the National Housing Development Trust, as we work to revise the Affordable Housing Policy to create a new strategy that will meet the demands of our Caymanian people.

In support of plans to improve the East End Community, works have been undertaken by the Facilities Management Department at the William Allen McLaughlin Civic Centre. To date, works on the flooring, ceiling, stage, and air-conditioning unit have already been completed; however, work is still in progress for the grease trap in the kitchen, bathroom renovations and installation of the electric vehicle charging stations.

For the Elliott Conolly Civic Centre in Gun Bay, new chairs and tables and new kitchen appliances have already been completed, while replacement of entry doors, basketball court resurfacing, the procurement and installation of the basketball hoops, and the LED lighting upgrade are in progress.

The Department's Facilities Team has assured me that for the upcoming financial year there will be a number of updates at all of the Civic Centres, including works on the interior, video and audio equipment installation, security alarm system installations, automatic security lighting and other areas. Again, these include both the East End Civic Centres; these upgrades will

make it safer for the members of our community to increase their physical activity in a safe fit-for-purpose facility.

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the onset, I am also proud to be the Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage. As I turn to Home Affairs, I am honoured to work alongside the Minister, the Honourable Bernie Bush, who has unwavering support and dedication to his Ministry. His priorities, which I fully support, are:

1. Talent identification and development;
2. Enhancement and empowerment of youth; and
3. Awareness and preservation of cultural heritage

Mr. Speaker, recognising the benefits of sports, I look forward to how the Ministry will further enhance our community facilities to support our young athletes to meet their full potential.

I must pause here to mention the achievements of East End's own Raegan Ruddy, as the first Caymanian gymnast to represent the Cayman Islands at this year's Tokyo Olympics. Her hard work and her parents' support allowed her to compete at the highest level, and we are extremely proud that she was our Ambassador on the world stage.

Another achievement is our athletes' appearances in Colombia now, at the 2021 Junior Pan-American Games. We wish them all the best.

### **Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage**

Mr. Speaker, since coming into Government, I have had the good fortune to witness the many activities and achievements that the team in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage has accomplished. The Ministry, in conjunction with the Cayman National Cultural Foundation, the National Gallery and the National Museum, have provided many cultural and heritage programmes and projects, and showcase various talented Caymanian artists through exhibitions.

I recently attended the opening of Miss Lassies' Exhibition and it served as a reminder of the epitome of Caymanian creativity and cultural expression. It was an absolute honour to be in the presence of the work of one of our national treasures, an artist like Miss Lassie, who began painting in her 60s. Also in exhibit, was Ms. Virginia Foster's work; her exhibit offers a bridge between the past and present and is an encouragement to all.

In October, the Ministry hosted a cultural event called "Caymanian Proud - A Time to Remember". This will be a recurrent event where the public can listen to stories of yesteryear and discuss the importance of preserving and safeguarding our Caymanian heritage.

Mr. Speaker, just last week when I served as Acting Minister, I enjoyed an event at the National Museum titled, "Old-time Days Come Back Again." These events provide an excellent forum for preserving our unique culture for younger generations to learn. It is through these events Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry upholds its purpose, "Preserve our past; strengthen our future."

Mr. Speaker, a primary goal of this Government is improving the quality of life for all Caymanians, and all the people who call the Cayman Islands home.

### **Ministry of Home Affairs**

Turning now to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Home Affairs' strategies and policies demonstrate full support for Government's priorities and are essential for the continued safety and security of the Cayman Islands. The Ministry has remit over six critical entities:

- Department of Public Safety Communications;
- The Cayman Islands Fire Service;
- Her Majesty's Cayman Islands Prison Service;
- Department of Community Rehabilitation;
- The Cayman Islands Regiment; and
- The Cayman Islands Cadet Corps.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of these key organisations include public safety, national security; the wellbeing of the community through effective emergency communications, the detention and rehabilitation of offenders; fire and rescue services, provision of disaster relief; security to the country and youth and leadership development within a disciplined, military-looking structure. The effective and efficient delivery of these services are the basis upon which any modern society must function, and are fundamental to this Government achieving its objectives.

Mr. Speaker, achieving the outlined objective for Home Affairs will not be easy given the challenges, particularly in relation to COVID-19, and a reduced budget. I have seen first-hand the Ministry's dedication, and I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the entire team, for its tireless service to these Islands. We know their jobs are not easy and they often work without due appreciation, so I pause to acknowledge the tremendous value they add to our society.

Mr. Speaker, achieving the plan set forth by the Ministry will require a collaborative effort with the support of both the private and public sector. We should see individuals and families being restored, reduced criminality; strengthened systems of communication across public safety entities, more efficient and effective emergency responses; a higher capacity to support during crises and recovery from crises and natural disasters; and better equipped recruits for public safety

and uniformed services. All of these allow for a thriving society, enhance the Cayman Islands as an ideal tourist attraction, and result in higher quality of life for our people.

There are key ways in which the Ministry intends to produce these results, Mr. Speaker, and they include the Ministry's People Development Strategy, its commitment to improve standards, and its prioritisation of strategic partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, I will first offer my comments on the impressive People Development Strategy within the Ministry. There is clear willingness to invest in developing the knowledge, skills and leadership capabilities of employees, most of whom are essential workers. This investment allows for a more advanced work force, resulting in quality of work in a critical sector, but also allows for greater opportunities for the advancements of Caymanians.

The People Development Strategy spans from intentional efforts to expand the pool and talent of potential recruits, to clear succession planning for leaders and emerging leaders across the Ministry. This is noted through the efforts to endow young cadets and work experience students, with opportunities and skills to smooth the transition into public safety careers, thus broadening the base of young, talented Caymanians into fields such as Prison, Fire, Police, Coast Guard, Safety Communications and Rehabilitation of Offenders.

Included in the People Management Strategy across Home Affairs, is a concentration on enhancing levels of qualification, specialisation and leadership training within the respective fields. This not only allows for an expansion of meaningful service, Mr. Speaker, but also results in less reliance on an overseas workforce and diversified career options for Caymanians across all levels of the civil service.

This is highlighted by the Department of Public Safety Communications' (DPSR) continued training with the most up to date technologies. It also includes the Department of Community Rehabilitation's multi-year roll out of the Change Agent Training, the Regiment's Specialist Training at the Royal Military Academy - Sandhurst, and a Cadet Corps PADI Certification, just to name a few examples, Mr. Speaker.

Additionally, across the Ministry there has been extensive leadership development with opportunities to act in top leadership positions, participation in the Institute of Leadership and Management Training, and involvement in special projects among so many others.

Mr. Speaker, both the Honourable Minister for Home Affairs and I are fully confident that Acting Chief Officer Michael Ebanks, the Acting Deputy Chief Officers and the Head of Departments truly demonstrate this in their deliberate actions to enhance recruitment and invest in employees, as well as advocating care for overall wellbeing.

Mr. Speaker, I urge this Government and the public, to heed these young leaders by valuing and supporting the men and women of Home Affairs, as they seek to execute difficult jobs in trying times. They are the heroes in the face of dangerous circumstances, Mr. Speaker; people working to keep the rest of us safe. They are worth every investment we can afford, and deserve our best support in their mission to protect us.

The Ministry's priority of improving operational standards is in terms of increasing effectiveness and enhancing efficiencies. Both are equally important as we are in an era of massive and rapid change. As a Government and society, we must keep pace to remain relevant, but do so with clear identity, vision and a steady strategy. This Ministry is unwavering in its determination to enhance public safety services for the benefit of our Islands. As a result, the strategic priorities reflect the willingness to change for the better; a concept that is dear to me, Mr. Speaker.

The ways in which the Ministry is striving to provide better public services is extensive. There is a clear priority on seeking a review and/or introduce legislation specific to the work of nearly every entity under Home Affairs. This includes reviews of the Prison Act, the Cadet Corps Act, the Alternative Sentencing Act, along with corresponding regulations. It also includes legislation on surveillance devices, the Mental Health court and sexual harm prevention orders.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, this Ministry's strategic priorities are consistent with upgrading their services to clients directly. A relevant example of this includes the focus on quality assurance, particularly by the Department of Public Service Communications (DPSR) and the Department of Community Rehabilitation (DCR) to ensure their services are measurable and impactful.

Both the Prison and DCR are part of a pioneering work group to form an offender management framework which will ensure there is stronger multi agency collaboration supervising high risk offenders in the community, thereby adding a layer of protection for the public and victims. This is supported by the work of the Department of Public Service to review its electronic monitoring service to guarantee the technology best meets the needs of its partner agencies in monitoring offenders referred to the programme.

It also aims to provide the highest level of empowerment and rehabilitative services by both the Prison and DCR to break the cycles of criminality and reduce crime. Other modes of improving services to clients is through the use of technological advancement, such as the relocation of the National Public Safety Communications Radio Tower and the next-generation 911 System. These projects are critical for increasing capabilities of emergency and first responder communications, inclusive of monitoring radio maritime traffic for the Coast Guard.

Mr. Speaker, another project that I have a personal affinity for is the medical alert devices for the elderly and vulnerable persons, which could be life-saving for some of our most precious people.

The Ministry also plans to build a new Prison, improvements to and re-building of out-dated fire stations, and procurement of additional vital equipment. I agree with my colleagues that the new prison is essential, as the current facility is dangerous to employees; it is also cost-inefficient and distracts from the organisation's focus and core mandates.

The Fire Service projects are necessary for compliance with international aviation standards and are critical so that domestic and international air travel are not hindered. It would allow for faster response times, cost-savings and even gender equity in amenities to staff. Equipment for the Fire Service and Regiment also allows for essential work to be done more effectively, such as taller ladders for the fire trucks to reach higher buildings, and a vehicle fleet for the regiment which has already proven beneficial in disaster relief, and restoring the Island to full functionality following storms.

Consideration is also given to ensure legacies of sustainability are created, as it is pivotal to this Government and the future of our Islands. This is highlighted with the Prison procuring Electric Prison Escort Vehicles and the new prison building being designed with sustainability in mind.

Mr. Speaker, as Thomas A. Edison said, **"There is a way to do it better — find it."** This Ministry wastes no effort in trying to effectively use the resources provided so value for money is demonstrated. This is especially important in the current fiscal environment; old ways of working are no longer effective and cannot continue, we must be willing to use innovation to work smarter.

Mr. Speaker, valuing strategic partnership reminds me of my motto: "Together, we the people achieve more than any single person could ever do alone." In complex times, working together is critical. Innate to the emergency in high stakes responsibilities of Home Affairs, is the need to work with others to meet public safety needs. This includes partnerships internal to the Ministry and across the public and private sector.

Examples of these strategic partnerships include: the Cadet Corps and the Regiment's enormous support to Hazard Management and the National Emergency Operations Committee (NEOC) in various emergency situations as well as their ongoing support with COVID-19-related programmes and projects, which include collaboration with the Public Health Department.

Recently, the Regiment was recognised for its collaboration with Public Works and Hazard Management, for the development of the Field Hospital. Cadet Corps instructors were also honoured recently for their roles in disaster mitigation. I would personally like to



extend my gratitude to them as part of their role in helping to manage quarantine facilities in my constituency of East End.

Mr. Speaker, all the agencies must strategically work together to ensure lives and property are protected and rescued. The Fire Service must also work hand in hand with the Civil Aviation Authority, private commercial businesses and the Planning Department. Without these planes cannot land or be refuelled, and buildings are not fire safe.

Our Offenders Management Services and Correctional Services include Department of Community Rehabilitation (DCR), the Prison and the SPAC/SPSC which also works closely with the Judicial Administration, the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, the Department of Public Prosecution, the Conditional Release Board, the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Counselling Services, the Health Services Authority and the Independent Monitoring Board. This work is critical to ensure an effective and fair justice system.

Some of these partnerships overlap with, and are related to, strategic work for safeguarding of victims, children and other vulnerable persons, Mr. Speaker. However, there are also specific close partnerships related to this work, including the Child Safeguarding Board, the Alliance to End Domestic Violence and the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre.

In order to better protect victims, there must be strengthened systems of support based upon close working relationships and information sharing. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Cadet Corps also has special ties to the Department of Education, various public and private schools, and other youth organisations, as well as the unformed services.

Home Affairs is also grateful for the support it receives from the Governor's Office and the Office of the Deputy Governor, especially in relation to matters of security and various relationships with interlinking boards and committees. There are numerous other statutory and private entities that continue to work strategically with Home Affairs, including the National Drug Council, the Bridge Foundation, Rotary Clubs, private businesses and various churches. They support our clients who have complex needs, including those who need placement to fulfil their community service orders.

Amongst all of these partnerships, Mr. Speaker, we do hope for strengthened relationships with the banks to help with reintegrating people from the prison back into society. It is also noteworthy that Home Affairs has a strong reputation for its volunteer work, and community initiatives that extend beyond their ordinary roles. These are special efforts they make to build ties to, and in, the community and include numerous projects by the Fire Service and the Prison Service and the DCR's special role with the chronically mentally unwell, Mr. Speaker.

I think we can all agree that the efforts of our unsung Home Affairs heroes to improve community

and wellbeing across these three Islands, is difficult to match.

Mr. Speaker, although it may seem exhaustive to highlight these various partnerships, and it would certainly be impossible to mention them all, I believe it is important to acknowledge the working relationships because, if we are to make a difference, we must value our alliances and continue to strengthen them for the good of the public.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and thanks to the dedicated staff of both the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure and of Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage for their dedication to the work and the vision of the Ministers and this Government. We must all be willing to accomplish more together than divided. Alone, this Government and these Ministries cannot achieve the outcomes we are striving for, we need the country's collaboration as well.

Before I close I want to state, Mr. Speaker, that despite the challenges we are currently facing as a result of COVID-19, I am optimistic about the future of these Islands. I am optimistic that the programmes and initiatives that this Government will complete over the next fiscal year, will make these Islands grow, and its residents grow stronger and more resilient.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance for the hard work they and their teams did to bring the Budget to Parliament, which is compliant with the Public Management and Finance Act and the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR). This budget puts the people of the Cayman Islands first, and this Government looks forward to the support of the House by voting for a budget that invests in our people. I end with a quote by Helen Keller: "**Alone, we can do so little. Together, we can do so much.**"

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and May God continue to bless these wonderful, beautiful, Cayman Islands.

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak?  
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?  
[Pause]

The Honourable Elected Member for Savannah.

**Ms. Heather D. Bodden, Parliamentary Secretary to T&T and IISD, Elected Member for Savannah:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise with a great sense of fulfilment in this honourable House today to provide my contribution to the 2022-2023 Budget Policy Statement delivered by the Honourable Premier.

I wish to thank His Excellency the Governor for his Throne Speech, and his recognition of the dedication this Government has put forward in steering the good ship Cayman through troubled and uncharted

waters. I am proud to affirm my support for this Government, and the incredible work we do every day to make the lives of all Caymanians better.

I also wish to take this opportunity to say how much I appreciate the long hours the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance and his team have spent ensuring [that the] budget that has been presented to this honourable House is without taxes levied on our people. I was delighted to be a part of this progress.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Premier assigned me to two different Ministries namely, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, and the Ministry of Investment, Innovation, and Social Development. I will speak briefly on topics that pertain to these two Ministries, starting with the duties assigned to me under the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who knows anything about me at all knows that I am passionate about my people, particularly about taking care of the elderly. With that said, having lived in Savannah, Newlands all my life, I also have been an advocate for taking care of our environment for as long as I can remember; but I do not just talk the talk as the saying goes. Rather, Mr. Speaker, I have worked diligently for many decades to enhance my community and work with the residents to keep our communities clean.

Over the years, I have led many neighbourhood clean-ups and spear headed various beautification projects in an effort to maintain the environment that we live in. The phrase, "Community builds Country," is not just a catchy slogan, Mr. Speaker; it encapsulates a sentiment that I truly believe in and hold dear.

Seven months ago on the campaign trail I promised that, if I was given the opportunity and was elected, I would seek to expand my efforts beyond the boundaries of Savannah, Newlands and work on a national level to enhance and beautify all communities across all of our Islands. I therefore cannot adequately put into words, Mr. Speaker, how grateful and excited I am to have received the support and blessings from my colleagues in Caucus and Cabinet to pursue this objective on a national scale.

The Cayman Islands has a global reputation for outstanding natural beauty and a well-maintained environment. We market our panoramic views to visitors, and use it as a picturesque backdrop to enhance our world-class tourism product, but if you look a little closer, there are still so many areas that, sadly, do not live up to the mark.

With the reopening of our borders and the onset of Christmas, it is timely that effort is made to beautify our surroundings; but not just for the sake of tourism, but rather for the pleasure and enjoyment of everyone—visitors and residents, young and old alike. Caymanians are known the world over for being warm, caring, beautiful people, and these attributes should be reflected throughout our homeland.

The Ministry of Tourism has generously allocated the sum of \$250,000 per year to be used in creative and innovative ways to beautify our Islands and ensure we welcome visitors back to Cayman with pride and with our stunning natural scenery showcased without litter and derelict vehicles spoiling the view.

To this end, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism has re-established the Cayman Islands Beautification Committee, and I am very pleased to report that Mrs. Karen Hydes, or "KK" as we are familiar with her, has been appointed Chairperson with Mr. Robert Bodden serving as Deputy Chairperson. Other members on the Committee include Ms. Marjorie Revvy, Mr. Edney Mclean, Mrs. Feliciana Ebanks, Ms. Omeria Gordon, and Ms. Nickeah Esteban. To ensure the Committee is as inclusive as possible, every district across Grand Cayman as well as the Sister Islands is represented, making this a truly national initiative. I would like to say that sub-committees will be set up under each of the persons that I just named.

The committee will report to the Minister of Tourism and will work closely with a cross section of Government agencies consequently, ex-officio members include representatives from the Department of Environmental Health, the Department of Commerce and Investment, the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service and the Chief Officer in the Ministry of Tourism. The committee will be guided by precise terms of reference with the goals to enhance the Island's aesthetic appeal in every way possible, including through the use of indigenous flora where appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, my intention is to go further than just having the average clean up in our neighbourhoods. I would like to see a national policy put in place for how we present ourselves, other businesses, workplaces and through our public transport on buses and taxis. By way of example, our airports are where travellers receive their first impressions. I believe we should have the welcome mat extended to welcome those visitors who arrive here as our guests; taxis and buses should be in mint condition when they pick up passengers. This says a lot about how passengers are transported.

A clean and fresh ride makes our guests look forward to their vacation spot. A well-received arrival gives the visitor a reason to return. Just like when guests are invited to our homes, we make sure the place is tidy and looks good; the same kind of care and attention should also be given to visitors to ensure we make a good impression. This will encourage them to have only good things to say about the Cayman Islands when they speak about their time here.

Beyond clean-ups and improving the aesthetics of our roads and beaches, I would like the committee to focus on providing their recommendations to address our Islands' litter problems which frankly, Mr. Speaker, has gotten out of hand. Some of the enhancements I envision may entail amendments to legislation,

as I would like to see stricter anti-littering laws with substantial fines far exceeding the current \$500. It is the PACT-Government's intention to enforce the Litter laws and eventually hire environment wardens to enforce those laws.

Mr. Speaker, these Islands must get back to the original way of how people used to take pride in their surroundings. I can attest that during my father's time on this earth, it was a daily battle for him to keep our Islands clean—he was a stickler for a litter-free country. He had signs made at one point in time that said, "I am your country. Please don't litter my shoulders." I presume his legacy lives on in me. People who live and work here must realise that it is a land of laws; they must comply and ensure where they live is clean and pristine.

I wish to take this opportunity to send out a huge thank you to the Department of Environmental Health and all the sanitation workers who collect our garbage. Mr. Speaker, I fight for them every day, because they are essential and do not have an easy job. When garbage is set out, it must be properly disposed of in proper bags and placed in proper bins. That way animals do not have an opportunity to scatter the trash. Sanitation workers are human, and they need us to work with them. We must do better, and the only way to enforce this is by enforcing the laws.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to mention the reset bulk waste clean-up and I know for sure that Mr. Richard Simms and Mr. Debert Dawes did an excellent job in making this happen. Their workers were out there day and night, at times having to return to the spot where the debris was offloaded two to three times. I know it was not an easy task, so I just wish to send out my grateful thanks for what they do on a daily basis to keep these Islands clean.

Aside from being an eyesore, abandoned vehicles are often utilised to store garbage and other refuse, which then attract pests and become breeding grounds for disease; From time to time, rusted-out cars have even become targets of arson and vandalism, so if you have derelict vehicles sitting around, please have them removed. This is unacceptable Mr. Speaker, especially for an Island that relies on tourism—the main pillar of the economy.

As we approach the holidays and the Government-sponsored NiCE Programme gets underway, a concerted effort will be made for roadside clean-ups to go beyond the main highways and make sure that we also leave our beaches and public areas free of trash. Alongside the Beautification Committee, I will spare no effort in my quest to make Cayman as attractive as possible, but there is only so much the Committee can do and it starts with us, Mr. Speaker.

Each and every person who calls these Islands home has a part to play and can start by taking ownership of their own surroundings, beginning with their homes and yards spaces. If there is vacant land adjacent to your yards or down the street, take a look at that

too, and report derelict vehicles that need removing or the unlicensed roadside garages that are popping up in residential communities without any regard for the law.

I challenge the general public, the private sector and especially our youth to join in this national initiative to keep our beautiful Islands clean. There are times in life when everyone needs to come together to lend a hand for the greater good and this is one of those times, Mr. Speaker.

With that said, I would like to recognise the many organisations and volunteers who regularly organise district clean-ups and I thank them for their commitment to keeping Cayman clean. I also look forward to including them in our ongoing efforts to maintaining and preserving our Islands' pristine beauty.

Mr. Speaker, as well as having oversight of the National Beautification Initiative, I will also have more involvement with Pedro St. James, the birthplace of democracy in the Cayman Islands—a place near and dear to my heart. The passage of Tropical Storm Grace in August caused severe damage to the vegetation and trees on the grounds of Pedro St. James. I am pleased to report that a generous donation of plants have been received to replace those that were lost. They have all been replanted and are located in high traffic areas which were in need of beautifying.

I wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank the person for this generous donation. I am really pleased with all that I see happening at Pedro under the very capable stewardship of the director Mr. Patrick Thompson.

Another aspect of my work at the Ministry of Tourism also entails beauty, but of a different nature. That is, in my role as the Ministry's representative on the Miss Cayman Islands Universe Committee. The Ministry has held the franchise for the pageant for over two decades, and in that time has helped dozens of young Caymanian women realise their dreams of becoming our Islands' most recognised tourism ambassador.

Throughout the years, the pageant has been run and organised by a committee made up of dedicated volunteers who devote countless hours doing whatever it takes, whether over weekends, weekdays or holidays, to support and advance this national event. In the eyes of the public, the Miss Cayman Islands Universe pageant is an annual event that we come out to and enjoy to crown our new Island queen, but long after the curtains come down and the stage lights go out, the work of the committee continues throughout the year.

As we speak, Mr. Speaker, our reigning queen, Georgina Kerford is in Israel, preparing to take part in the Miss Universe pageant on December 12<sup>th</sup>. I know I speak for all of us in this honourable House today, in wishing her every success as she represents our beloved Cayman Islands on the global stage. I know firsthand the level of dedication and commitment that it

takes to run the Miss Cayman Islands Universe Committee and Pageant, having volunteered my services for the past 25 years.

I was more than pleasantly surprised, in fact overjoyed, by the Minister of Tourism's announcement that he would be seeking to add a paid permanent position to assist the Miss Cayman Islands Committee. The Minister also confirmed his intention to increase the level of funding provided to the Committee, and I know this awesome gesture will also be well received.

With respect to my constituency of Savannah, one of the biggest time-wasting and annoying issues affecting the constituents, is the traffic congestion they endure on a daily basis. I, too, can attest to the bumper to bumper crawl that occurs during peak hours, as I head to town in the mornings and return at the end of the day. I am therefore supportive of the Government's policy decision regarding the continuation of the East/West Arterial Road Extension, and look forward to working closely with both the Minister of Tourism and the Minister with responsibility for roads, to ensure that the good people of Savannah, Newlands and the outer districts get the benefit of easier traffic flow through our new road system.

While roadworks continue, Mr. Speaker, I am gravely concerned about road safety. I have seen so much lawlessness and recklessness on our streets lately. Drivers are not practising road safety; it is as if drivers do not value life. The speed at which I see drivers traveling on our roads is cause for major concern. They speed without realising there are speed limits. Again, Mr. Speaker, let me remind those who take those chances, [that] they are breaking the law.

On a regular basis I watch with bated breath, the speed [at which] some [people] drive through the school zones. Flashing yellow lights are provided, Mr. Speaker, to indicate that they should drive with caution, but many do not ever give a thought to the lives of those students. Buses pull out from school zones yet drivers ignore the precious lives on those buses. Will it take a serious accident for change to happen?

I am delighted to see that the Purple Ribbon Programme will once again be used during the holiday season, and hope this will help to keep our streets just a little bit safer. I take this opportunity to express thanks and appreciation to our Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. These officers have a huge undertaking protecting and keeping us safe. They are appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, the Joanna Clarke Primary School looks forward to the construction of a Community Hall which is much needed. This hall will not only provide an area for the students to participate in activities but it would also serve as a hurricane shelter for the community. I also wish to thank the Minister of Education for providing free lunches for our children. Students are being given the opportunity to receive a nutritious meal. Education is and will always remain a top priority for me.

In the past seven months, I know for certain there has not been a day that I have not been out there for my people. I got back into politics for the same reason as the Honourable Premier—to give people hope. As to home-grown representatives, the community of Savannah-Newlands is in safe hands. In the next few months Savannah-Newlands will see a huge transformation and I say, *stay tuned*.

I too grew up in the day and age where it was a village that raised a child, and I am proud to say that my parents taught us values and morals and taught us what hard work is all about. That is part of what drove me to seek re-election and become a full time representative for the Savannah community, which I hold near and dear to my heart.

In this community, the Honourable Premier and I are happy to be able to provide a full-time Community Office that provides services to our people Monday through Friday. Having such a facility with dedicated staff, we are able to accommodate our constituents, even when we are sitting here in Parliament. While we may not be there every day, we are here in this honourable House building a foundation for future generations of Caymanians and taking care of our people, many times until the wee hours of the night.

Mr. Speaker, the past few months our office has been utilised as a vaccination clinic which came as a great benefit to the people of the Eastern districts. It is widely utilised for persons getting the first dose, second dose and even the booster. Mr. Speaker, this would not have been possible without the caring staff of HSA and Public Health. The time they spend with each person with gentle hands, make the experience more comfortable. I sincerely thank them Mr. Speaker, for all that they do.

Mr. Speaker, in July of this year, the Islands' National Insurance Company (CINICO) opened a new branch at the Country Corner Shopping Centre in Savannah. The office is a convenient out-of-town location for persons who reside in the Eastern districts of Grand Cayman and allows business transactions to be conducted during business hours without clients contributing to the already unbearable traffic congestion.

Given the level of convenience provided by this new CINICO office, I would like to introduce a pilot programme to establish a Needs Assessment Unit (NAU) office in the area as well. There are a number of other initiatives that this Government would like to put in place to benefit the residents in the Bodden Town, Newlands and Savannah areas and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, my other Ministry, the Ministry of Social Development is also near and dear to my heart, especially because it touches our seniors. The Ministry is home to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Needs Assessment Unit.

In their respective role as partnering entities, they both play an integral role in strengthening the support system to ensure the wellbeing of vulnerable members of our society, namely children and youth, adults

and older persons, including the provision of appropriate social services and welfare support, recognition of family, and social support to maintain quality lives and recognition of opportunities for autonomy and self-actualisation.

Mr. Speaker, the DCFS protects and promotes the rights and welfare of children and families through the provision of social work, intervention, public education, advocacy and community-based programmes; foster care and adoption services, and the placement of vulnerable children and older persons in residential facilities. The NAU assists members of the society who are unable to support themselves financially, or their families, due to disability, unemployment and other impacting financial challenges.

Jointly, Mr. Speaker, these entities take into account what is right, fair, just, or good to identify what ought to be done and what is most acceptable in the delivery of best social work practices. They respond to social, cultural, physical and global changes that have an impact on the vulnerable members of a society, and engage in approaches to bridge any existing gap in meeting the needs of vulnerable persons in our society. Much is in the works for the betterment of those who fall into this category.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot get up here and speak in this honourable House without mentioning the seniors in our community. Senior citizens are placed at the forefront of one's thoughts at this time of year. The past year and a half has been extremely challenging for many of them. Many have been stuck in their homes, unable to go out like they used to. COVID has definitely cramped many of their styles. We need to make every effort to keep in touch with them. Many are familiar, using a cell phone with ease. They are able to text and WhatsApp, so I am asking everyone to keep in touch with our seniors. Make them feel loved by checking in with them regularly.

I wish to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to just thank the Management and staff of DCFS for all that they do with our ageing population.

It was an honour to participate and represent the Ministry of Social Development during the month of October, which recognised our elderly. Despite COVID, many events were held that gave our seniors an opportunity to mingle and see friends and family. It was refreshing to see the joy and happiness on their faces at being out in the open, fresh air, after being cooped-up for so long. As we enter the Christmas season, let us make every effort to ensure that their Christmas is bright, and that lots of love and attention is placed on them.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister, Elected Member for West Bay South is tasked with many programmes to allow our seniors a better quality of life, and it is my intention to be by his side during the duration. Senior citizens: much is being done with you in mind, to make your life easier and more comfortable.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport and the Minister of Investment, Innovation and Social Development for the invaluable support, assistance and guidance they have provided to me since I became a part of their respective Ministries. I have so much respect and admiration for these two young men. It is my honour to work side by side with each of them.

I also wish to extend sincere thanks to the Chief Officers and the talented and experienced civil servants who work hard and do their best every day to support all of the elected representatives as we endeavour to improve the quality of life for all who call these Islands home.

To my constituents: You are always on my mind. Thanks to Debbie and Leann for managing the office in our absence; thanks to my PA, Angela, who wears her heart on her sleeve. Their support and dedication to our constituents is most appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a quote from Charles Steele, Jr. entitled "Faith":

"I believe in today.

It is all that I possess.

The past is a value only as it can make the life of today fuller and freer.

There is no assurance of tomorrow.

I must make good today."

(UNVERIFIED)

Mr. Speaker, it is a long, hard road ahead, but we must have faith that we will get there; may we always remember that it takes a village, and [that] we are all in this together. I thank you, and May God continue to bless these beautiful Cayman Islands.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]* The Honourable Member for West Bay Central.

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for West Bay Central:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today humbled to represent the people of West Bay Central to speak on a budget that has frequently been referred to as a "People's" Budget", and that is what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Before I offer my contribution, I would first like to thank God for affording me the opportunity to stand in this honourable House to be the voice for the people of West Bay Central. I would also like to thank my husband Michael, and my children, for their unwavering support. My husband has made many sacrifices so that I could pursue this calling, and for that, I am grateful.

I would also like to thank my parents, Austin and Mary Ebanks and my siblings, for their support—not only for supporting and encouraging me, but for

teaching me many valuable lessons that I view as critical components to leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I have been taught by good people who believe in treating others the way that you want to be treated, offering a lending hand when you are in a position to do so, never thinking of what you might be losing because, in the end, you are always blessed with more than you set out with in the beginning. These life skills are critical in my role as a representative for my people, and I want to publicly thank my parents for all that they have taught me.

I may be new at this, Mr. Speaker, but thanks to my parents, West Bay Central has a representative that will always lead with compassion and humility. I also want to take just a few moments to thank my committee, who worked diligently leading up to the election and whose support I will always crave and appreciate.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the small but mighty team at my constituency office, my Tropical Storm Grace clean-up crew, which has now birthed the West Bay Central Dignity Project— these men and women have been cleaning up our community; and last but not least, to my predecessor, Captain Eugene Ebanks, who spent a large portion of his life serving his country and his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank all the residents of West Bay Central who decided to take a chance this past April, by electing me.

The first seven months have been very busy working with my colleagues; we have been meeting very frequently at the Government Administration Building and the House of Parliament. We have been mapping out [the] reopening and more recently, the budget. Now that we have these two very important and time-consuming tasks out of the way, I am excited to start rolling out the benefits of this budget to my people in West Bay Central.

Mr. Speaker, when the line-up of Ministers hit the news on the first week post-election, many people were excited to see that the Member for West Bay Central was going to hold a seat in Cabinet.

I was excited too, Mr. Speaker, as a woman from West Bay, to hold a Cabinet seat; and to have all three Members from West Bay in Cabinet, save for you, who would be holding the seat as Speaker of the House; but Mr. Speaker, as time progressed, what seemed like one of the longest weeks ever, our intention all along was to have a true representation of independents and PPM Members.

It was our goal to have an Independent-led Coalition Government. When the news broke that we might be able to attract the interest of the Member for Cayman Brac East, I was more than happy to accommodate her by giving up my seat, knowing that another female would be in Cabinet and that we all could benefit from her experience—and that we have, Mr. Speaker. Today, I am proud to stand as the Parliamentary Secretary for Education to give my contribution to this important subject area.

Mr. Speaker, I have always been passionate about educating our young people as I know that a strong educational background provides the foundation for future success. This passion for education has only deepened since being elected earlier this year. I am proud to be a part of this Government that has chosen to prioritize education.

The Strategic Policy Statement has education listed as the very first Broad Outcome; it is at the top of our agenda. Improving education to promote lifelong learning and greater economic mobility. As Parliamentary Secretary for Education, I am supporting the Honourable Minister in bringing about improvements to the education system as a whole and by extension, to the community.

Mr. Speaker, I spend a considerable amount of time in my community and as a result, I have the opportunity to hear first-hand feedback from parents, guardians and even students. This feedback is often positive, and persons share ideas for improvements and needs within the educational system. Feedback is important, as we want to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our students and our community. Many of the initiatives set out in our SPS, Mr. Speaker, I believe are critical for our students' success.

In August 2021, the Honourable Minister announced the provision of breakfast, lunch and snacks for all children enrolled in the Government Primary Schools and the Lighthouse School. Whilst the Member for George Town South has raised that she does not support the universal approach at a time like this, when everyone is hurting; when NAU is inundated with work, being hungry, should not mean being stuck with a stigma and, Mr. Speaker, we are serving the people within the present needs.

I am pleased to report that this programme has had resounding success in the three months since its implementation. On Monday to Friday, each week, students are provided with tasty and nutritious meals, the provision of which will undoubtedly, positively impact their physical, cognitive and behavioural development.

Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I was guided to a quote made by Trevor Noah: **“People love to say, give a man a fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man to fish and he will eat for a lifetime.” What they don't say is, “And it would be nice if you gave him a fishing rod.”** That is what these meals are, Mr. Speaker; these meals have become a lifeline to many children and families as they help ease the financial burden and uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I was particularly heartened to learn that primary school students were still able to access the meals that they needed while in lockdown. Mr. Speaker, please permit me to thank the Minister of Education, her team and the Department of Educational Services, for implementing the necessary measures to ensure that students' nutritional needs are met, thus ensuring the continuity of learning.

This was my first confirmation that continuity was, and will be going forward, critical to the success of the Ministry of Education for I too, campaigned on providing free breakfast for the children and I was elated to have discovered that this was a policy that was already written and ready to be rolled out. My contribution was merely to support making this policy a priority for this budget. This, Mr. Speaker, is why I am so happy that the Honourable Minister was able to maintain her seat in this Ministry.

Ms. Juliana is working with a Government who supports her, and I commend her former colleagues for always giving her praises, but when I look at all that this woman has done to prepare “her children” as she calls them, I can only imagine what the Minister would have accomplished if she had this Government to support her from four years ago.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Deputy Speaker:** Many of the policies that she has worked on would have been fully implemented *long time*. To my people, I assure you that appointing Ms. Juliana to mother Education was the right decision.

Now, back to the school meals, Mr. Speaker. We rolled out the meals in a phased approach due to budget constraints and I look forward to the introduction of the next phase of this programme in our secondary schools, which is scheduled to begin early 2022, so that all of our children will have the necessary support they need to optimise the opportunity to learn.

Speaking of optimising learning opportunities Mr. Speaker, I am quite pleased that this budget supports the Education Ministry's move to place additional assistant teachers in our public schools. These individuals will undoubtedly provide well-needed support to more of our classroom teachers as they apply teaching and learning strategies to help students, particularly those with special educational needs, enabling all students to realise their full potential.

While there have been arguments against the effectiveness of teaching assistance in some quarters, evidence from a random trial conducted in Denmark back in 2018, confirmed that assistant teachers had positive impacts on students' test scores and these effects are persistent over time for disadvantaged students. Findings for the trial further suggested that assistant teachers are not just for class size reduction but are particularly impactful when sharing instructional responsibility for the classroom.

I am truly grateful to be a part of a Government and a Ministry that acknowledges that building a stronger, integrated education foundation is fundamental to our development and growth as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to highlight the importance of mental health for persons in our community, but especially for students. The Cayman Islands

and the rest of the world are managing the prevalence of COVID-19, and our students are part of this process.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Deputy Speaker:** The mental health and wellness of our students is a key area of focus included in the Strategic Policy Statement.

In September of this year, the Ministry of Education issued guidance related to COVID-19 for educational institutions. This guidance was important in promoting the health and safety of our students and staff. In addition to physical safety, the need to ensure mental health is also critical. Councillors and specialist staff have been focused on students' overall health as they balance their school work and the new normal of COVID-19 in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pause and thank you, sir, for being a champion for the needy. I enjoyed meeting with you recently to map out a plan to provide an after-school support for the children in West Bay. It has been nice to meet with you and, more recently Reverend Mary Graham, to determine how we could roll out this after-school programme. In short order, all four Members from West Bay will have the opportunity to partner with Reverend Mary Graham to provide an after-school programme, which she has already implemented in the George Town District.

Mr. Speaker, while this budget does not have any allocation to support this programme, we as West Bay MPs will chart the course, and look to partner with private sector; we intend to build on this in order for it to be a national initiative by the next budget period.

I want to commend our students for being very responsible throughout this pandemic. They have followed the guidelines and worked together to promote safety measures within the schools.

As we educate our students, it is also essential for us to provide them with a safe and harmonious school environment free from bullying, and other negative behaviours. The act of bullying can have a dire effect on children or young people's physical, emotional, social, and even psychological health, the effects of which are frequently carried over into adulthood.

The National Anti-bullying Policy for school students was approved in late 2020. It sets out the school's responsibilities to counter bullying, establish consistent expectations and promote an understanding of all bullying-related issues. Our public schools and several independent schools, have since used this document as the basis for their internal anti-bullying policies, but I also look forward to working with the Minister, Mr. Speaker, to put forward the supporting anti-bullying legislation early in the New Year. This legislation is needed, because it sets out a reporting mechanism.

Mr. Speaker, another area of education that I am excited about is the introduction of more Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics,

known recently as STEAM. We know that the technology sector is growing and students now, more than ever, are technology savvy. It is critical that educators are equipped to help students promote this technological knowledge and are able to successfully integrate technology into learning.

We have seen our high school students involved in a robotics programme. They have won several regional and international prizes. This is a starting point. It is excellent preparation for careers that involve STEAM. I am confident that we will see our students as future doctors, for example, utilising robotics to conduct surgeries and other medical interventions.

Mr. Speaker, the increase in government scholarships will also assist students in having sufficient funding to access university-level programmes that focus on STEAM-type careers and allow students to expand on the education foundation that they would have received here in the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very excited about enhancements being planned for Technical Vocational Education and Training. Our public high schools already include a number of T-VET courses as options for study. These are to be expanded and additional courses are to be offered at CIFEC—the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre.

There are also a number of educational institutions offering TVET programmes to the general community. Mr. Speaker, these opportunities are critical, as there is a need for skilled and competent individuals in TVET careers. We all know that these careers can be very lucrative and it is encouraging to see students enrolled and doing well in these courses.

Speaking of TVET training, I would like to state publicly that this is an area that I am excited to focus on during this term. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that TVET is one of the key pillars to building our middle class. It is now time to implement a National TVET Framework, which I would love to champion; I am very pleased to have been given the Minister's blessing and I look forward to placing an emphasis in this area.

With my passion for TVET, I am pleased to see that a cross-Ministry approach has already begun for a pilot programme with the Public Works Department (PWD). Mr. Speaker, when I say cross-Ministry, I am not referring to sharing of financial allocations at this time, but human capital and as the Parliamentary Secretary (PS) for Education, I am happy to have been asked by the Minister of Planning and Infrastructure to assist with developing a programme that will cater to the more mature students. I am pleased to work alongside the Minister of Planning along with Messrs. Troy Whorms, Andy Francis and Michael Myles from Inspire Cayman, on a project that has the potential of making a huge impact on our Caymanian people.

Mr. Speaker, there is a need in every organisation to enhance the job performance of the employees. The implementation of training and development is one

of the major steps that most companies need to enhance employee performance. With organisations having better trained and developed employees, organisations are then able to afford ways for spending on improved performance.

I am pleased that this budget will provide this pilot TVET programme to be offered to older applicants. The proposed project is to support the development of human capital by way of quality technical and vocational training necessary to support economic growth. This will be achieved by strengthening and building on an already existing institutional capacity at the PWD Apprentice Training Programme.

Mr. Speaker, in recent times, the scarcity of applicants with the requisite skills to effectively perform key specialised roles, in particular, within the PWD and by extension, the wider civil service, has become a cause for concern. Considering the current industry climate and the trend of importing skilled, low-wage construction workers, a more direct approach to the development of local human capital is required. The programme will have four central goals, namely:

1. To create a medium through which young Caymanians may develop specialised skills;
2. Providing gainful employment;
3. Permit PWD and the wider civil service to identify, mould, and retain talent to ensure sustainability and business continuity; and
4. To help de-stigmatise TVET and advance it in the driver for economic growth, human capacity development, and nation building.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Deputy Speaker:**

Mr. Speaker, there is a current need in the Department of Planning to recruit and train staff to ensure the Department continues to deliver world-class services with trained, certified, personnel and this programme will be able to afford the Planning Department with the expertise that is required.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, on a constituency or district level, I am also looking forward to partnering with Inspire Cayman and I will be rolling out a TVET Training Programme hosted right in West Bay. This will provide my people in West Bay Central and the entire district, an opportunity to have better opportunities to compete in the workforce. I am proud to be on the Government side that has all of West Bay fully represented. This means that district initiatives, such as the TVET Training Programme, would benefit the entire district.

As our budget has been constrained due to COVID allocations, this initiative, again, will initially be done from a constituency level in partnership with private sector; however, it is definitely going to be an area that I intend to grow along with my colleagues to take it to a national level. I am looking forward to the further success of the education sector in the coming years. I



plan to work closely with all of our schools and in particular, the Sir John A. Cumber Primary School, as we collaborate to bring about the best outcomes for our children.

Turning now, Mr. Speaker, to the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce, I would like to thank the Honourable Minister for Financial Services for inviting me to speak as the Parliamentary Secretary. He has tasked me with speaking on the Statutory Agencies and Government Company's (SAGC's) Budget Proposals for this budget period.

In outlining their challenges and opportunities for the next two years, I will also update this honourable Parliament and the public about the SAGC's recent contributions to our economic stability. Like the Core Ministry and its entities, they all have a good story to tell, as evidenced by the fact that a number of them are self-funded or highly respected internationally by their peers—or both.

Mr. Speaker, the five SAGCs under the Ministry are the:

- Cayman Islands Monetary Authority
- Cayman Islands Stock Exchange
- Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands
- Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands; and
- Auditor's Oversight Authority.

I will start with the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority (CIMA).

Since its inception nearly 25 years ago, CIMA has become a major gatekeeper in the financial services industry as it provides responsible oversight of banking, corporate services, insurance, investments, fund management and trusts. Its comprehensive legal framework and regulatory systems, along with their rapport with the Ministry and working relationship with the industry, greatly supports Cayman's adaptability to evolving international standards and our reputation as a preferred international financial centre.

Under its current Strategic Plan for this budget period, CIMA is reviewing its operational structure to best manage its growing supervisory responsibilities. It is improving its internal operational efficiencies, including automating manual processes to allow human resources to be allocated to higher risk areas of supervision. It is also strengthening capacity and capabilities and enhancing stakeholder engagement practices. These actions support CIMA's fulfilment of international standards, which over the past two to three years have expanded to require an increased focus on AML supervision of CIMA-regulated entities, increased oversight of registered persons under the Securities Investment Business Act, implementation of an administrative fines regime and supervising of virtual asset service providers. Considering this activity Mr. Speaker, CIMA would benefit from increased human and technological resources from Government.

## Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Supervision

Speaking to AML supervision, CIMA recently enhanced its risk based supervision framework, deployed a risk assessment tool, increased its onsite inspections, and established a separate division for AML supervision, which is now staffed with 27 employees. However, the division needs at least 15 to 20 additional staff to fully manage onsite inspections, rather than outsourcing them and to supervise Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants (CIIPA) Registered Practitioners (RPs).

Mr. Speaker, CIMA's Securities Supervision Division, which is responsible for the prudent supervision of RPs, also needs resources. CIMA also urgently needs at least four to six additional lawyers to implement administrative fines, which includes managing judicial review-and-related litigation matters; because the administrative fines process is quite involved, it requires experts with the utmost technical and legal accuracy. At least seven staff are needed to develop and issue regulatory measures and update internal operational processes for virtual assets service providers, the Cayman Islands Civil Service Credit Union, Crisis Management, CIIPA Licensees and to comply with Group of International Financial Centre Supervisors' recommendations, as well as the Basel III Standards. Staff are also needed in IT, HR and Finance.

Mr. Speaker, one of the top five risks identified in CIMA's Internal Risk Register is failure and/or inability to retain or attract sufficient members of skilled and competent employees in a timely manner. Indicative of this, is the fact that most of the support teams—and this is non-supervisory divisions—have not grown over the past few years, yet they are supporting a team that has doubled in staff. This poses a significant risk for CIMA.

Its recruitment efforts are primarily challenged by the lack of qualified and specialist candidates locally and the work permit requirement for recruiting overseas candidates. Attractive salaries, employee benefits and more reasonable workloads offered by the private sector are another challenge for CIMA, Mr. Speaker. As CIMA endeavours to employ staff—experienced and qualified staff—the turnover is rising. These challenges were amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, similar to its human resource needs, another of CIMA's top five risks is [that] inadequate adoption for new items, or utilisation for existing items of technological tools and platforms, result in excessive time spent on manual processes of data and duties.

Another risk [is that] the Authority fails to keep pace with industry innovation and trends, products and services, and changes made to domestic and international laws, regulations or standards and subsequently fails to meet or adopt applicable changes to Cayman's regulatory framework.

Mr. Speaker, technological resources and expertise would allow CIMA to address these risks and as a result, allow them to better manage their human resources in efficiently supervising their regulated sectors. They therefore ask that Government consider providing additional support.

That said, Mr. Speaker, temporarily setting aside the HR challenges, CIMA's continued good work is based on teamwork—investing in professional and personal development; a family oriented working environment and a strong leadership support structure. The Managing Director, Mrs. Cindy Scotland, must be highlighted and commended for her passion to the cause over her long tenure.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange, which has been a specialist exchange for sophisticated products with a focus on being an efficient gateway to global markets. The broad array of companies that access the exchange include global financial institutions, emerging technology and life sciences companies and some of the world's most successful hedge funds.

The stock exchange currently lists more than 6500 securities and maintains a market of more than US \$645 billion. The benefits from listing on the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange include its flexibility, efficiency and competitive fee structure which attracts international issuers, and its long-standing international recognition as a listing centre for investment funds and debt securities.

On this point, Mr. Speaker, the Stock Exchange is recognised by the UK Government by way of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs Agency and under the UK Income Tax Act 2007. It is a member of the International Organisation of Securities Commission—the global standard-setter for securities' regulation. It is registered as an Affiliate Member of the World Federation of Exchanges, and the Cayman Stock Exchange and Jamaican Stock Exchange recognise each other on a reciprocal basis, which allows Cayman to better capitalise on CARICOM market opportunities.

Another benefit, Mr. Speaker, is that the Stock Exchange disclosure and continuing obligations are easier to comply with than certain other stock exchanges, while it remains well regulated by the Stock Exchange Authority.

The Stock Exchange's objectives are to protect investors and the public interest and prevent unfair discrimination between customers, issuers or broker members; ensure that broker members deal honestly and fairly with investors and have sound finances and management; ensure that business is conducted in an orderly manner to afford proper protection to investors; ensure that broker members are effectively monitored for compliance with enforcement actions taken as needed; and to promote and maintain high standards of integrity and fair dealing in the business transactions made by broker members.

Stock Exchange listings increase year over year. In particular, it has seen strong growth in securitisation listings such as aircraft financing transactions. It also retains its position as a leading offshore listing venue for bonds and other debt securities involving the leading financial services firms and for listing Collateralised Loan Obligations (CLOs). As a non-EU exchange, the Stock Exchange continues to be highly regarded as a practical, efficient exchange for CLO listings where investors do not require a European nexus. Overall, the Stock Exchange continues to see increasing market capitalisation based on strong listing volumes of debt securities, which finance private-equity-backed transactions and the refinancing of CLO secured structures.

Mr. Speaker, the Stock Exchange has implemented new HR and Payroll Software, improved capacity to accommodate increased traffic to its website, upgraded its IT Security to safeguard public facing websites from cyberattacks, and become a digitalised, paperless environment. Lastly, the Stock Exchange financial performance continues to be very strong, based on deliberate efforts to increase revenues and control expenditure.

#### **Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI)**

Mr. Speaker, I am now going to discuss the Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI). The people of the Cayman Islands have had a long and intricate relationship with the sea, and this long intricate relationship was indeed things maritime that supplied the foundation on which our society was built. It is little wonder, therefore, that "*He hath founded it upon the seas*" forms part of our Coat of Arms.

It was the sea that sustained us from the days of the fishermen, turtlers and boat builders, to the international seafarer and now tourism, in the more recent years; and I am proud and honoured to be a champion from a national level, to build a broader maritime sector. If only my late grandfather Harvey Ebanks who was a turtler—went to Mosquito Key and also sailed with the National Bulk Carriers; a man who fought sharks to bring home turtles, for him to see me here, in this honourable House, delivering this message about building a new maritime industry.

Although he is not here to watch me today, I am so proud that another sailor man in my life, my dad, who also served this country at sea with the National Bulk Carriers; whose love for his wife and his children is deeper than the ocean, can watch me today as I speak about an area that I am passionate about because he raised me on the ocean, and I am proud to be a "saltwater baby".

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Deputy Speaker:** I thank my dad for teaching me to appreciate the beauty

of our waters, because of that appreciation, Minister André Ebanks has tasked me with a role that I am very proud to focus on.

Mr. Speaker, we seem to have taken things maritime for granted. It is probably because of this intricate relationship that successive governments have not taken a national and more holistic, approach to the development of the broader maritime sector. Chartering a new national approach does not mean discarding things from our rich maritime past—indeed, it would build on these very traditions.

However, Mr. Speaker, it does require a much broader approach. An approach that the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce plans to take, with the development of a new national maritime strategy that embraces these Islands' blue economy in its widest sense, from tackling the old chestnut of maritime boundary delimitation—on which talks continue—to providing formal maritime training and work experience opportunities for young Caymanians, including a Cadet Ship Programme.

The Maritime Authority has established itself as one of the world's top performing flag states and currently provides maritime regulatory compliance services to roughly 50 per cent of the 30-meters-and-over global Superyacht market yet, there are no naval architecture firms either based or working out of Cayman. Neither are there any yacht ship or crew management companies operating out of here.

Mr. Speaker, the continuous development and implementation of this National Maritime Strategy can only help to propel these Islands forward by creating complementary activities that will help diversify our economy beyond tourism and international financial services.

I am looking forward to a potential cross-Ministry approach between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Tourism, to explore career opportunities for our younger Caymanian men and women, [such as] gaining employment on some of the very cruise lines that visit our shores.

Mr. Speaker, the Maritime Authority is Cayman's maritime administrator and it serves the global shipping community. It ensures effective implementation of relevant international maritime and related conventions that have been ratified by the UK Government and extended to Cayman.

One of MACI's primary roles is to stay abreast of international shipping industry developments, particularly, the numerous international conventions and instruments affecting ships and their operation. Where appropriate, MACI gives input in their development; to this end, it attends meetings of international bodies where policy and standards are agreed [such as]:

- The International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the main body responsible for prescribing international standards and requirements with respect to safety of life at

sea, maritime security, and the protection of the marine environment;

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) which establishes internationally agreed-upon standards for seafarers' employment and working conditions; and
- The Caribbean Port State Control Committee of the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (CMOU)

Other organisations whose activities significantly impact international shipping in regards to Cayman flag vessels, include the International Association of Classified Societies, the United States Coast Guard. Various signatories to other regional Memoranda on Port State Control and, increasingly, the European Union.

MACI's regular functions include, under international conventions and codes: the Cayman Islands Shipping Registry, implementing Cayman's maritime safety and security, marine pollution prevention and social responsibility obligations; and under Cayman legislation for Cayman flagged vessels: implementing Cayman's obligations under foreign flag vessels entering Cayman ports, representing Cayman at International Fora to protect its maritime interests and also helping with efforts to facilitate Cayman's development into an international maritime centre.

In addition to these functions, MACI's achievement over the past 12 months include implementing the PDMS MARIS Survey Platform to issue electronic certificates and develop electronic certificates of British registries that will be verifiable to the Cayman registry website.

MACI also maintained the White List Status under the Paris, Tokyo and US Quailship 21 Port State Control Systems, which allow Cayman-registered vessels to undergo less port state control inspections while in Europe, Asian and US waters.

MACI also ended 2020 with 2304 vessels registered under Cayman Islands Flag—the highest in its history—and with a total tonnage of 5.96 GTR; successfully completed the IMO III Code and, as Cayman's representative was re-elected as Vice Chair for the Caribbean Port State Control Committee for the Caribbean Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Port State Control for a further three-year term.

Mr. Speaker, MACI has three strategic initiatives planned for the coming calendar year:

- It will be continuing the collaboration with major yacht refit yards to encourage the use of codes and Cayman yacht specialist advice during the refitting process;
- Continue automating its processes, including introducing an e-register and further development of electronic certificates to other service areas; and

- Continue to make efforts to reduce costs, enhance efficiencies and generate revenue while adjusting to a new business-friendly environment in government.

### Civil Aviation Authority (CIA)

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to the Civil Aviation Authority (CIA), which oversees aviation safety and international aircraft registration.

Stringent standards and a mandate for absolute safety compliance have guided the Authority's oversight of Cayman-registered aircraft for more than 50 years. As a result, the Civil Aviation Authority's aircraft register is globally recognised by owners, financiers, management companies and other aviation industry decision makers.

Its strategic vision is for a safe and credible aviation industry in the Cayman Islands with the mission of enhancing aviation safety performance through effective regulatory oversight; therefore, CIA operates according to statutory legislation predicated on the UK legal framework. Two major governing pieces of this legislation are:

- The Air Navigation Overseas Territories Order 2013, which contains regulations governing the operational and airworthiness requirements of Cayman-registered aircraft; and
- The Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements, which contain guidance from the UK government for all overseas territories.

Despite challenges presented by the onset of the pandemic, the Civil Aviation Authority met its regulatory obligations. It maintained its financial stability and protected staff's wellbeing through its secured electronic data management resources and processes, which have been in place for many years. Staff and contracted inspectors work remotely with clients globally in their own time zones.

Mr. Speaker, the Civil Aviation Authority's client base also experienced difficulties in the past 12 months. The international aviation industry, particularly, was negatively impacted by the pandemic with countries closing borders, leisure and business travel being halted and airlines either reducing flights or halting operations altogether.

International Civil Aviation Organisation stats help to tell the story. Similar statistics were recorded in relation to international passenger traffic, however, the Authority was sustained throughout the pandemic by measures it implemented in 2018 to grow the base for the Cayman Islands.

### Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

**Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport, Elected Member for George Town Central:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2), for the debate to continue beyond the hour of interruption.

**The Speaker:** The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order for the business of the House to continue after 4:30.

All in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it; the Member may continue.

**Mrs. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks:** Going forward, Mr. Speaker, the Authority has a number of key targets. It is reviewing its longer term strategic plan to extend it to 2025. This will position the Authority for strategic growth as a sustainable statutory organisation, by outlining its plans to maintain its financial independence, embracing technology—I like this one—striving to *Caymanise* the Authority with a highly specialised technical experienced human resources team and maintaining its full regulatory designation for safety and economic regulation of the Cayman Islands Aviation Industry.

The Authority also expects to oversee continued growth of the Aircraft Registry for operational register and transition aircraft. It will continue partnering with key industry members to effectively oversee air-dromes and all associated services; aircraft on the registry, local air operator holders and foreign aircraft that operate to the jurisdiction. For 2022, revenues of \$7.66 million and expenditure of \$5.36 million, and in 2023, revenues of \$7.86 million and expenditure of \$5.49 million.

I am wrapping up, Mr. Speaker, I only have one more authority to speak on, which is the Auditors Oversight Authority.

### Auditors Oversight Authority

Since May 2012, the Auditors Oversight Authority has regulated and supervised recognised auditors who audit certain entities' financial statements; it operates a system of oversight, quality assurance, disciplinary action and investigation, mainly through periodic on-site inspections.

It began registering audit firms in January 2015 with the first inspection in May 2015, and the latest being conducted in early 2021. In 2017, the Ministry amended legislation to facilitate international cooperation by improving the Auditors Oversight Authority's operation, chiefly by increasing its scope to include designated and specified companies.

While its resources are limited, the Auditors Oversight Authority plays a significant role in our international reputation. It is a member of the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators, a global body for audit regulators which focuses on enhancing investor protection through improved audit quality worldwide.

For its inspections, the Auditors Oversight Authority uses teams affiliated with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, a major UK professional body for accountants. The Authority's budget request will help the Authority to support the work of the accounting sector and indeed, the wider financial services industry, by adhering to best practices and international standards.

In summary, the Ministry's five SAGCs are integral to Cayman's Financial Services and Commerce industry; their commercial activities contribute to government finances, are greatly respected by investors, and—because of their performance—have earned global reputation for effective regulatory standards and practices. Again, I thank the Honourable Minister for Financial Services for allowing me to speak on them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am pleased to be part of the Government that is going to address many of the social ills the Cayman Islands people have been facing.

I am happy to see how my colleagues, Minister André Ebanks and Minister Jay Ebanks, have developed a cross-Ministry initiative to address housing which the people of West Bay will benefit from. This Government is focused not only on developing social housing but also affordable housing. That is my colleagues' vision: to merge social housing and affordable housing. This, Mr. Speaker, is progress.

I thank the Minister of Planning and Infrastructure, for committing to building homes on [both] the Apple Blossoms and Lighthouse Gardens locations in West Bay; because we have the land identified and available, I am confident that we will be able to address West Bay's housing issues in short order.

I am also pleased, that the Minister of Planning has committed to addressing many of the low-lying areas in my constituency and [to that end,] I thank him for touring West Bay with my colleagues. I am grateful too, that we will be addressing some of the high-traffic streets in our district. One that is dear to me, although it is not in my constituency, is Reverend Blackman Road, which I think is in your area, Mr. Speaker, [because] I know you have expressed it needs to be addressed due to speeding and frequent accidents.

I am also excited to see that the Deputy Premier is looking at the way Permanent Residency (PR) applications are being considered. Many young Caymanians are struggling to secure homes because of the large influx of property purchases being made to secure residency, so I am excited to see that he is willing to look at ways to protect and promote Caymanian home ownership.

Additionally, I am happy that the Minister is looking at ways to ensure that Workforce Opportunities and Residency Cayman (WORC) is developed in a manner that ensures all of our able-bodied Caymanians have their rightful place in the workforce.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to be working with a group of representatives who have one common goal: to put our people first and make Cayman work for Caymanians. I look forward to what we will all accomplish together, with God's help.

May God bless this honourable House; and the Cayman Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak?

*[Pause]*

That was the last call and the Member for Red Bay has risen. The Member for Red Bay.

*[Long pause]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome this opportunity, at the start of my 22<sup>nd</sup> year in this honourable House, to make a contribution to the debate on the Throne Speech and the Budget Address delivered by His Excellency the Governor, Martin Keith Roper, OBE; and the honourable Deputy Premier on Friday.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the discussion about those speeches though, I believe I cannot not acknowledge and recognise the occurrence last night of one of the Members of the Opposition and one of my excellent Ministers in the last Administration, having joined the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I am not—and in fact, I am tired of hearing about it—going to delve into the murky waters surrounding the creation of the current Government after the last elections, but, I will simply say this, Mr. Speaker: the Honourable Premier, in his speech, said [that] the country had voted for change. I am not at all certain that that can stand up to any analysis, given the fact that eight Members of the previous Government and the entire PPM team were elected; all other Members except the Premier and the Member for Savannah, were elected on their own platforms.

In many instances seats that we, the Alliance, did not contest, we did not contest them because we made judgments and in some cases, we made agreements, that should certain candidates there be elected, they would assist us in forming a Government. That is all water under the bridge, but this I know: the country may not have voted for change, but change is what they have got.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe that my dear friend, and I mean that sincerely not facetiously, the honourable Dwayne Seymour, has made a bad political choice and I told him so. I told him so for the last five months, but he has made his choice. He is an experienced politician. He is a good man. He is a good representative and politics aside, I consider him a dear friend. His heart is in the right place without question.

He stood with me, His Excellency the Governor, and the rest of my team through the really hard early days of the pandemic, when no one in the world really knew what to do and many made fun of him, including some who are sitting over on the other side with him now, but this I know: we held 65 press conferences on the trot—the Minister and the Governor were in attendance at each one.

As they say in those old Western books that I loved to read when I was a youngster, “he is a man to ride the river with.” You do not have to look to see where he is, he is going to be there—he does not frighten easily. He is a good man, and I do hope, Mr. Speaker, that he will be able to contribute to the work of the new Government, because Lord knows, they need all the help they can get.

I do not know, Mr. Speaker, how so many of them can stand up in this House and preen, the way I have heard some of them—not all of them—do. They must be living in some parallel universe, because I move around this Island, every single district, I spend a lot of time these days in places of ill repute—some would say—but I learn what people are thinking and what is on the ground, and I can find no constituency of support; no approval of the way the Government is managing, and has managed, the COVID pandemic since they took Office. None.

I understand that there is an assessment that is being written now, that will be published in another few weeks. We shall see what that says, but, Mr. Speaker, I can say this, were I still the Premier, the management of this would have been very different; very, very, different.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay:** Mr. Speaker, without question, the country had to reopen at some point, but I do not know who thought the point to reopen was when the virus was at its highest peak, in terms of spread through the community, because that is where we are now.

The one thing, Mr. Speaker, that I will say the Government has done an excellent job, is continuing the vaccination programme we put in place and having achieved a level of cover that frankly, neither I nor anyone on my side thought possible—and that is excellent. And, Mr. Speaker, I hope it continues to hold true, that the vaccine is preventing, I believe, us from having significant numbers of deaths, although every life lost is costly; but when you look at what has occurred in

other countries, I think we can believe that at least for the time being.

We do not know what this Omicron variant is going to do, no one does, but I think “*so far, so good*” would have to be my assessment of how well the vaccination is working, although I did learn of another death today. Whether that individual was vaccinated or not, I do not know.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay:** However, Mr. Speaker, the disaster of having allowed the community spread of the virus to the extent that it is currently—and there is really little sign that it is at peak and starting to fall off—it flies in the face of, and presents a major obstacle to the two main goals that any Government would have:

1. Reopening, so that our tourism business can start to come back; and
2. That local businesses, many of whom have been hanging on by their fingertips for the last 18 months, would start to get the benefit of this new economic activity.

However, at the level that it is, the community spread of the virus, scares local people away from events, bars, restaurants, stores... And Mr. Speaker, who in their right mind, seriously now, who in their right mind would travel to a country for vacation, where the level of community spread of the virus is so high, that you are almost guaranteed to get the virus, and if you test positive for the virus, you will then be condemned to your hotel room until you test negative? Now, who is going to—not volunteer—pay, for that privilege?

If I am a father in Minnesota [or] one of those cold states in the United States now, and I am tired of the cold, tired of the fact that we have not been able to travel for a couple of years and I want to go somewhere nice and sunny for Christmas, and I say to the wife, ‘*Let’s take the kids and go to Cayman, lovely place. She says, but hon, the kids can’t go because they cannot be vaccinated; and if we go, we have to test negative before we go, [and] we have to do a LFT on day 2, day 5 and day 10.*’

There is such a high level of the virus in the community now, that the CDC has cause to issue a travel advisory saying that it is dangerous to travel to the Cayman Islands because you are almost guaranteed to get the virus. Who is going to pay for that privilege? To come to Cayman and have to leave the children home with grandma—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay:** —have to do these tests, and if you are found positive, you will have to stay in your hotel room for the 8 or 10 days or whatever length of time you plan to visit.

The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that without effective control of the community transmission of the virus, the economy cannot and will not ever recover. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure this out. Just look at what has happened all around the world, but let us stay in the region; let us look at the Turks and Caicos Islands, with which most of us are familiar.

Their success with getting tourists there, is because they have managed to control the community spread of the virus. Not eliminate it, but keep the numbers low enough that people are not in constant fear once they observe the necessary protocols in terms of sanitisation, and mask-wearing, and social distancing.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the Government expects there to be a return to anything approaching normalcy in relation to the tourism industry or indeed, local trade, if they do not do something or some things to slow the spread of the virus. Not one effective mean or measure has been put in place since we had this breakout in September. We had gone 14 months without a single positive case.

We can argue about whether it was brought here by drug runners from Jamaica; or it was the reduction in the quarantine period to 5 days; or that it was moved to an honour system as to whether people stayed in quarantine or not. It may well be all of those factors, but Mr. Speaker, the current policy of the Government seems to be, *"we are going to let it run until it burns itself out."* That may eventually work, but it has not worked in any country in the world so far. I know our population is small... In the meantime, it is continuing to damage any economic recovery we could hope for.

Mr. Speaker, somebody or *some bodies* need to get their arms around this issue. Somebody needs to develop some courage, in terms of how we enforce the necessary protocols to slow the transmission of the virus. We have got to get off that Travel Advisory Level-Four list. We have to be able to allow unvaccinated children to travel with their parents, if we are to have any hope of tourism recovery.

Instead of doing that, Mr. Speaker, it seems to me, and to many people who speak to me on a regular basis, that they are experimenting with something else, proposing to bring a cruise ship here on the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month. Let us try to get one element of our tourism industry sorted before we go and introduce, potentially, increased risk of—now that we got this new variant—bringing the virus here again. We all know from the early days, that cruise ships have been the crucible of the spread of the virus because of the way ships are set up and the close proximity in which people have to interact naturally.

Mr. Speaker, the Government must be deaf if they are not hearing what people at Cayman Islands Tourism Association (CITA) and elsewhere are saying about their lack of proper management of the industry. I just read an article in the *Cayman Compass* reporting

on the CITA meeting which was held yesterday, I believe.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would like to read it; it is available on their website for everyone, so I hope I can be forgiven for not passing out copies of it; they can follow along with me if they wish. It is entitled **"Tourism chiefs say not enough Caymanians to fill hospitality jobs"**, and this leads me into another massive concern that is growing out there—not just in relation to tourism, but I will deal with tourism first—about the non-action by Immigration Boards with respect to processing work permits.

Mr. Speaker, the article, written by Miss Norma Connolly, is published in today's *Cayman Compass*: **"Tourism chiefs says not enough not enough Caymanians to fill hospitality jobs":**

**"Even with every Caymanian who has expressed an interest in working in restaurants and hotels taking up a position, there will still be 600-700 jobs that need to be filled in those fields, as the industry gears up to receive growing numbers of visitors, tourism chiefs say.**

**"According to Cayman Islands Tourism Association President Marc Langevin, about 50 Caymanians registered with Workforce Opportunities and Residency Cayman (WORC) had indicated they would like to work in the food and beverage and hospitality industries.**

**"This leaves hundreds of jobs that would need to be filled with work permit holders, but work permits were not currently being approved, Langevin said, as he spoke at CITA's Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 30 November."**

Speaking at the AGM at the Marriott Resort on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> in November, **"The association's vice president, Michael Tibbetts, owner of the Clearly Cayman Dive Resorts on all three islands, said there were three main problems facing the hospitality industry in Cayman—COVID-19 regulations that bar unvaccinated children from entering Cayman, air arrival capacity, and a lack of staff.**

**"Tibbetts said rules that prevent children that are too young to be vaccinated from coming to Cayman means that the Islands are not attractive as a holiday destination for families of young children.**

**"He added that many businesses are currently operating with a third of the staff that they would need to cater for tourists in their hotels and restaurants, noting that people who had worked in the hospitality industry, whether Caymanians or worked with holders, had settled into other jobs or sought work elsewhere."**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, where is that article found?

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** It is on the *Cayman Compass*' website, sir. It was published a few minutes ago.

**The Speaker:** Are you going to read much more from it? If you are, I would prefer to get a copy of it.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I can ask; it is fairly long sir.

**The Speaker:** And you want to read more from it; is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Yes, sir.

**The Speaker:** Then I would prefer to have a copy. We can take a break and you can get me a copy, please.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Sorry.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I believe I can do better than that.

I could ask the Serjeant to have copies printed from the Cayman Compass website, go on and talk about something else, then come back to this.

**The Speaker:** Saves time.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker, let me use the interlude to thank His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martin Keith Roper, OBE, for his presentation of the Throne Speech and indeed, the new approach which he has adopted with respect to the Throne Speech, where he essentially sets out his stall—the areas for which he has constitutional responsibility and the issues around them—rather than simply a brief version of what the Premier will shortly say once he is complete.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot say enough good things about His Excellency the Governor over the years that I had the privilege of working with him as Premier. That does not mean that we agreed on every single thing, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting that, but we certainly agreed on far more than we disagreed on and we had a very, very, good relationship.

I thank him for his incredible support and advocacy for Cayman First in the UK in particular, but elsewhere as well. He is a career diplomat and has contacts in many places in the world which proved to be very useful, very helpful to Cayman; and Mr. Speaker, one of the things I aimed to do as Premier, was to try to improve the relationship we had with the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, I never understood why we would not want to have the best possible relationship with our administering power, because nothing good will accrue to us if we are in a constant state of hostility with the UK. There are many issues on which we have to disagree with them or take a different view, but I do not think that in disagreeing we necessarily need to be disagreeable. The improved relationship with the UK paid massive dividends over my two terms as Premier. We managed to get through the constitutional changes; their

support in dealing with the endless challenges which the financial services industry faces and will continue to face; their agreement to allow us to develop the Coast Guard and the Regiment; and Mr. Speaker, most of all I think, in most peoples' minds locally, their assistance and continued assistance with managing the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor was invaluable, absolutely invaluable, in his interventions on Cayman's behalf with the UK.

Even now we are getting many things free of any direct costs to the Cayman Islands Government—test kits, LFTs, advice from what was Public Health England. I cannot remember the new name. Countless, countless, ways the United Kingdom Government has assisted Cayman and continues to assist Cayman; and I am sure the other territories as well. Our Governor has been at the forefront ensuring that Cayman was able to benefit, often advocating for things which otherwise we would not have had.

Mr. Speaker, I have nothing but good to say about His Excellency. I am pleased that it appears that the new Premier has also forged a good relationship with him, for that is absolutely key to getting things done for Cayman. His Excellency has been, and remains, a great ambassador for these Islands as well; he advocates for our cause at every possible opportunity. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it only right that I take this opportunity to say that to him publicly for I have not had opportunity otherwise, following the elections.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the many, many, many people—and they are in the thousands now; civil servants and otherwise who have assisted and continue to assist us to manage this COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Lee, Dr. Williams-Rodriguez, Dr. Hazel Brown, Mrs. Lizette Yearwood, Minister Seymour, Mr. Jonathan Smellie, and all the many members of staff. I am sure I left key people out, but Mr. Speaker, we could not have done, and we could not have gotten to where we have, without that level of commitment.

So, Mr. Speaker, despite my criticism of the current Government's management of some aspects of this pandemic Cayman is still, without question, in one of the best positions of any country in the world with so few deaths resulting from the pandemic, so far. Mr. Speaker, that is the result of a combination of things, [including] our being able to hold strain and keep the virus from spreading in the community until we were able to get people vaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, right on cue, as I finished that segment of my contribution, the good Serjeant brought a copy of the article from which I was reading.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, with your permission sir, may I read?



Cayman Islands Tourism Association President Marc Langevin says that while the tourism industry welcomes the Government expansion of the types of securely... Ah, this is not the article.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** No. Sorry, sir; Serjeant, see it here.

Mr. Speaker, the article which I wish to read is important because it sets out CITA's concerns about the Government's current management or lack thereof, of the tourism industry and the Government's, and in particular the Ministers', seeming lack of appreciation of what is necessary to make the tourism industry work—what is required to provide the services that tourists come and pay money for; in particular, staff.

I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that Members of this House appreciate what is happening and what is likely to happen over the course of the next few months—or perhaps I should put that the other way: what is not going to happen. Leaving aside the major issue of continued community spread of the virus, what is not going to happen is that we are not going to receive very many visitors until these issues....

We are not going to receive visitors to fill these places, to rent the cars, to go into the restaurants and bars, to go on tours, to go see the stingrays; without people here, none of these things are going to happen, and so, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition called for yet again, the Government seriously needs to reconsider the amount of the stipend that is being paid to persons who are out of employment or not making anywhere near what otherwise they would make, because tourism is still effectively shut down.

The Leader said \$2,000, I would say \$2,500 now because it is clear that people who have been unemployed or employed at a much reduced level, or earning from their businesses at a much-reduced level for the last 18 months, are going to be like that for another year, easily. Mr. Langevin says in that article that we have already missed the Christmas Season and January, simply because we just do not have in place what we need to have in place. Staff is one of the big issues.

Mr. Speaker, Cayman has done incredibly well through this pandemic; I have to tell you that it exceeded my greatest wishes and prayers.

When we shut this economy down to prevent the spread of the virus—because we knew that was effectively what we were doing—we had the belief that it was going to create major economic shock to the system. We saw the possibility of many businesses failing, and we understood that Government was going to have to support a lot of these.

The Leader of the Opposition, who was then the Minister of Finance, will recall my going to him and saying, *'Minister we need to get a contingency line of borrowing because Cayman's Government cannot be*

*in a position where we can't pay salaries; we can't pay vendors, and we can help our people when they need it most.'* At that time we were in an admirable position in terms of cash, but we really foresaw that there was going to be massive economic fallout. Mr. Speaker, while there have been serious issues for many people, Government has been helping them and, as I just said, they need to help them some more; but remarkably, once we were able to eliminate the virus from within our community to keep our people safe, and people started to realise, *wow, I can go out, I can go to the bar, I can go to restaurants, I can go to the cinema, I can go to church,* people started spending money in the local economy.

I have friends who own hospitality businesses, bars and restaurants, two in particular. Of course they were beating my ear when we had to lock down, even though they understood why—they were all worrying about their businesses. The businesses were nowhere near what they were doing before, especially those that relied on tourism, but they kept going, Mr. Speaker. Since the outbreak in September, that has changed; both tell me that their businesses are down between 30 and 40 per cent depending on which week you are looking at.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you introduce another factor when you tell them, *you cannot get any permits;* but you are talking about bringing tourists back.

Mr. Speaker, I have the right copy now; I will try again:

***"Tourism chiefs say not enough Caymanians to fill hospitality jobs***

***"Even with every Caymanian who has expressed an interest in working in restaurants and hotels taking up a position, there will be 600-700 jobs that need to be filled in those fields as the industry gears up to receive growing numbers of visitors, tourism chiefs say.***

***"According to Cayman Islands Tourism Association President, Marc Langevin, about 50 Caymanians registered with Workforce Opportunities and Residency Cayman (WORC) had indicated they would like to work in the food and beverage and hospitality industries.***

***"This leaves hundreds of jobs that would need to be filled with work permit holders, but work permits were not currently being approved, Langevin said, as he spoke at CITA's annual general meeting on Tuesday, 30 November."***

Speaking at the AGM at the Marriott Resort, ***"the association's Vice President, Michael Tibbetts, owner of the Clearly Cayman Dive Resorts on all three islands, said there were three main problems facing the hospitality industry in Cayman. COVID-19 regulations that bar unvaccinated children from entering Cayman; air arrival capacity and lack of staff.***

“He added that many businesses are currently operating with a third of the staff that they would need to cater for tourists in their hotels and restaurants, noting that people who have worked in the hospitality industry, whether Caymanians or work permit holders, had settled into other jobs or sought work elsewhere. ‘It’s not like we can turn a switch and expect people to come back and re-staff resorts or water sports businesses and restaurants.’

“Tibbetts acknowledged that the issue of hiring workers and re-mobilising the hospitality industry was ‘politically sensitive’ one, adding that CITA had made it a priority to hire Caymanians, holding job fairs and submitting vacancies to WORC.”

“Langevin said tourism in Cayman would not return to a substantial level (and this is important) until unvaccinated visitor children were allowed to travel with their parents without quarantine; until the regime of lateral flow testing for visitors was reduced; and until the travel authorisation process was simplified and expedited.

“He added, ‘We will need to address urgently, the shortage in tourism workers, especially in food and beverage positions, recreation and diving operations, and getting the support of the WORC and the Cayman Islands Government to develop fast track access to work permits to ensure we are not limited in our recovery effort.’

“Earlier this week, Tourism Minister, Kenneth Bryan speaking in Parliament during the budget debate, said he was committed to changing the face of Cayman’s tourism industry by encouraging more Caymanians to get involved and invest in it. He noted that close to 700 Caymanians had upskilled during the lockdown period by participating in one or more of the 50 training courses that government had offered.”

“Tibbetts, speaking at the AGM, said CITA had been prioritising the hiring of Caymanians, but noted that even one type of job in a resort had enough local workers to fill it, there were others, such as dive instructors, servers or cooks, that would also need to be filled before the business could cater to a full capacity of tourists, as ‘there is this conundrum that hospitality is a team sport. We have to be able to hire a certain number of work permit holders to be able to get back on Island economy,’ he said.”

“Langevin said it did not appear that work permits were currently being processed. ‘What we are hearing is the boards are not meeting because they are in training,’ he said. ‘In the meantime, the clock is ticking.’

“The CITA President told members that if businesses wanted to be fully staffed by Christmas, ‘it was too late because the work permits would have had to be signed a month ago’—taking

into account how long it takes a worker from overseas to arrange to come to Cayman, quarantine if necessary and be on-boarded into the business. ‘If we want to be back for opening in mid-January, it’s too late also because those work permits would have needed to be signed by 28 November,’ he said, adding that if a business was aiming to deal with 50 per cent capacity by the US Public Holiday of Presidents Day, on 21st February, work permits would have to be approved by 28 December.”

“A spokesperson for WORC confirmed that the figure of 50 Caymanians quoted by CITA refers to individuals who are receiving the tourism stipend and who have registered with the agency as ‘Job Seeker Extended’ clients, who had expressed the desire to work in the fields of food and beverage, culinary and/or as beach and pool attendants.

“Showing a PowerPoint slide outlining the current confirmed airline routes, Tibbetts said, at most, air arrivals are currently at about 10 per cent of ‘normal’ capacity, and look likely to be only at 30 per cent by the end of the first quarter of 2022, and 40 per cent by April. Langevin noted that as flights slowly increase in number, the local population will also be travelling, so it’s not just tourists who will be booking the seats on the limited number of flights. ‘It is compounding the problem here. We are certainly hoping to get more flights,’ he said.”

“Earlier this year, the Department of Tourism carried out a detailed survey of people who had lost their jobs in tourism after borders closed and who were receiving the stipend. Tourism Minister, Bryan said at the time that the survey aimed to provide information to help guide the work of the Remobilisation Committee to get displaced tourism workers back into the industry and find jobs for Caymanians interested or qualified to break into the tourism field. At the time, 3,398 people were receiving the monthly \$1,500 stipend at a cost of \$5 million a month for government.

“The survey indicated that 49 per cent of respondents were not currently working, with the vast majority of those stating the stipend was their only source of income. Of the 51 per cent who described themselves as employed, 74 per cent, or 1,158 people were considered underemployed and were working fewer than 30 hours a week, while 13 per cent were in full employment. Of the 3,107 people who responded to the question of whether they would like to return to the same job in tourism that they held before the pandemic, 87 per cent said they would.”

The rest is about a prize, but Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very serious issue. As I said before we got the correct copy of the article, the local economy has done amazingly well, but that is not the case currently because the continued widespread of the virus is dampening people’s willingness and enthusiasm to be out

and about. My prediction is [that] it is going to be a very, very, bleak Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, this issue with work permits, particularly for the tourism industry, is one that the Government needs to grapple with immediately. Mr. Speaker, I know—I am not guessing, *I know*—that administrators are not considering permits. With your permission, I would like to read just one very short of the many WhatsApp messages that I get in the course of a day, complaining about these things:

*“Hi. Latest mess RE: Immigration. They have now removed all administrators from making any decisions on work permits; this includes business staffing plan approvals. They are severely backed up. We have work permits we put in in October and the date for some of them to be considered is now March. Others we put in are now not as yet receipted.”*

Mr. Speaker, we are going to face a massive crisis over the next few months if the work permit process is not sorted out. We know; we heard the Government say, *“jobs for Caymanians”*. We are all in favour of that, Mr. Speaker—every single one in this House. Not one of us in here do not believe that Caymanians should not get jobs first.

The problem with getting workers in the hospitality industry in Cayman, is one that has plagued us since my generation was coming up through school, when teachers, parents and everybody [said], *“I don’t want my child to work in no tourism industry. I want you to put on a white shirt and a necktie and go work in one of them banks.”* That was the mantra that was beaten into us when I was growing up. The problem has existed since then.

We all were very enthusiastic about the incredible work my colleague, and then Deputy Premier and Minister for Tourism, did with the Hospitality School; but the numbers that we could get into the system and then the even smaller numbers that come through at the end, nowhere near approach the number of personnel with the requisite skills that are necessary to operate one of the biggest tourism industries in the region.

We have heard it here and from other forums, the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Tourism pounding this issue. *Caymanians got to get jobs! We ga fix um! We ga fix the Immigration!* Mr. Speaker, we are gonna fix it alright—we are gonna fix it so that our economy goes into freefall; that is what we are going to do.

Mr. Speaker, the Government needs to rethink these things; if not stopped, and another route charted fairly shortly, the rhetoric that started during the campaign and is still being spouted by Government Ministers—this anti-investor, anti-development, anti-immigration rhetoric—will be the demise of our economy.

They shouted from every platform they were on, that the Administration I had the honour to lead for two terms favoured the developers and the elite, but Mr. Speaker, any close analysis of the speeches made by the then Minister for Finance, the current Leader of the

Opposition and I, will tell you that is not the case. Speeches...anybody can say or read this. Look at what we did in those years to help people, our own people. No, we did not get it all done and we did not get it all right—who does; but we certainly worked hard, Mr. Speaker.

I could go through the long list of social intervention measures we put in place, because I have it here: from completely waiving stamp duty on a first-home purchased by a Caymanian up to \$400,000, and even if you bought one that was \$600,000, we gave you a waiver for the first \$400,000 in terms of what stamp duty you had to pay. Look at what we did for the Seamen stipend; veterans; people on permanent financial support assistance. A wide range of things, Mr. Speaker.

The incredible work our Minister of Education—at least they adopted one there that knows what she is doing—did to make the lives of children in school better; better salaries for teachers so that they can stay in the profession and teach our children. I do not want to go through all of that long list because it is just going to take up my time. They are no more “people driven” [or] “people centred” than we were. None. Just shouting it, shouting it, does not mean anything; let us see what you do.

Where we differ fundamentally, in terms of philosophy and policy with the current Government, Mr. Speaker, is that we understood that there is no money tree out there behind the Government Administration Building that you can come and shake every day and get what you need. When I heard the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Minister Ebanks, read out the list of things that he was going to buy, it reminded me of when my son Caelan was a little boy.

He liked to give you these long Christmas lists—he sent one to Aunt Debbie, one to mommy and one to me. He was in the car with his mother so she said to him, *“Caelan, mommy and daddy don’t have the money to buy all those things.”* He said, *“No, mommy; just stop by Hurley’s and go to the machine.”* That was the ATM. Because he had seen us go there and get money, as a child he did not understand [that] you got put money in there, to get money out.

Mr. Speaker, when I listened to Minister Ebanks I said to myself, *“Lord, for all of his money, I would not want to be the Premier today.”* For all of the current Premier’s money, I mean, I would not want to be Premier today.

Mr. Speaker, I led the Opposition for two years, the party for 10, and 8 years as Premier. Believe you me, if there is anybody who understands how difficult it is to get consensus around budget issues, Alden McLaughlin understands that. Even some of my strongest supporters, even the Deputy Premier confessed yesterday, how they used to get vexed with me when I would tell them, *“listen: understand that anytime you add another item of recurrent expenditure, you have done so for life. It is not just the money that you have*

*to spend this year to keep that policy [or] that programme in place, or maintain that project. Every single year you have to find the money—in good times and in bad.”*

Mr. Speaker, I have searched. I have read it three times, even though the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance did not want to give it to us. I read the Hansards of his speech three times, searching for some kind of fiscal policy, some financial strategy. I do not have the best eyes in the world, but with these glasses I see pretty well and I could not find anything, Mr. Speaker; nothing approaching a fiscal policy or financial strategy. The closest thing to it I could find, and it is not in his speech, it is my assessment and I wrote down somewhere, is borrow and spend. Borrow and spend; but Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition said, this is not the United States of America, we cannot print money like it is going out of style.

Mr. Speaker, you know, because through all my political life you have been a factor: when we were not warring, we were loving. That is how it had to go. I am a practical, pragmatic politician like yourself. Mr. Speaker, you know this keenly.

You see the “Great Recession” which came upon us starting the middle of 2008? Mr. Speaker, that taught me the biggest, and I believe most important lesson of my political life, because I came in as a young Minister—Minister for Education and a host of other things: Education, Training, Employment, Youth Sports, Culture, Financial Services, Pensions. Oh, I could do anything; I was Superman. That is what you think when you are 39 years old, right? But Mr. Speaker, we were determined [that] we were going to build those schools. There had been no government schools built in nearly 20 years. Government did not have the finances to do it. You could not do it from general revenue, so we agreed a course of borrowing.

In 2005 none of us saw the Great Recession coming in 2008 and, Mr. Speaker that happened when you were there, because we lost the government in 2009. Where civil service salaries had to be cut because Government could not pay its way. You had to go float a major bond issue which we still have. We paid down half of it, but it is still there. Mr. Speaker, I am slow to learn but long to forget that which I have learned.

When God in His grace, and the people of these Islands gave me the opportunity to return to Cabinet again, and that time as Premier, I swore a solemn oath to myself—not to anybody else—that I would never, if it is in my power, allow that to happen again. I will resign as Premier, before I allow my team to put me in a position where I am risking the financial stability of Government.

Mr. Speaker, some of the younger Members (in terms of politics) on the other side may not understand because, no matter how bright you are or what education you got, it takes time to understand that *confidence* is the most important currency [that] any country has.

Confidence. Confidence in the stability of the government and the systems. That is why investors will come and plunk down millions of dollars on a little rock like this. That long history of stable Government [and] sound finances. Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, something that I do not believe most of the Members on the other side seem to grasp, again, is that without sound finances, without money in reserves, Government does not have the ability to put and keep in place the social programmes that they tout and that we by and large—most of it by and large—support.

Unless Government has the revenue, it cannot do things for the people. You got to constantly balance these two things. You keep cussing the foreigners; keep cussing ‘um. Keep saying you do not want no investors, you do not need them. So see where we go, where we wind-up.

Mr. Speaker, our strategy, and we repeated it like a mantra, I am only going to refer to the last two budgets we delivered the last term and by the way Mr. Speaker, any Minister of Finance worth his or her salt should be proud of the budget they deliver.

You see what my Minister did? Look at that, beautiful. It was even prettier than this, it was red. This is just a black and white copy. **2018 to 2019 Budgets - Maintaining Fiscal Prudence: An Inducement to Growth; the Honourable Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MLA - Minister for Finance and Economic Development, 27 October 2017.** Within minutes of him having delivered this, it was up on the Government’s website. Proud of the budget he delivered. Here is what he said, Mr. Speaker. There is a whole section:

**“2018 and 2019 Fiscal Policy**

**Our overriding fiscal strategy is to manage Government’s finances in such a manner that there are:**

- 1. Substantial operating surpluses each year;**
- 2. No new fees or taxes levied on the public; and**
- 3. No new borrowings apart from refinancing an element of the 2019 Bond.”**

Then he went into all of the details relating to that. In 2021, another beautiful document. **Strong Economy; Stable finances; a Successful Cayman:**

**“Fiscal policy**

**Our overriding fiscal strategy is sustainably manage the Government’s finances by adhering to the following guiding tenets:**

- 1. Compliance with the principles of Responsible Financial Management;**
- 2. No new fees or taxes levied on the public; and**
- 3. No new borrowings.”**

Then he went into the details.

Mr. Speaker, there is no such heading in the Honourable Minister of Finance's address from Friday. I see a whole lot of politics in there and as I say, I have been here for 21 years, not quite 21 budgets because we shifted to two budgets per term, but [in] pretty close to 20 budget addresses I have listened to, I have never heard the Finance Minister's Budget Address so politicised.

You leave it for the Premier or the Leader of Government Business, as it was at one time, to do those things because the heritage of this came from a time when the Financial Secretary delivered the Budget Address. Plenty time for politics, but now we are dealing with the nation's financial welfare. You need to be talking numbers; you need to be talking financial strategy [and] fiscal policy. You need to be examining what is happening elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Speaker, our great fear on this side is that this "borrow and spend" fiscal policy that appears to be what the Government has chosen to do will end us in a very bad place, because all of these things are linked, Mr. Speaker.

Do you know why the budget is in as good shape as it is in comparison with the regional forecasts, despite COVID? Because of the battle that the Attorney General (AG), a number of others and I fought with the financial services industry that did not want to bring more of the funds within scope and have to pay fees for them. That is where that extra \$51 million came from; but you cannot look for those sort of windfalls every year, Mr. Speaker.

Now, it is quite apparent, that any recovery of the tourism industry is going to be very, very, slow; and you are talking down development and construction? You are pressuring businesses that need work permits. Where are the economic drivers going to come from that will allow us to fund, not just the budget—which is just under \$2 billion CI over the two-year period—but now you have to payback principal and interest on nearly \$350 million that you are going to borrow?

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition put it absolutely right. What this budget represents, is a failure—a failure on the part of the Premier and the Deputy Premier (who is the Minister of Finance) to get their team to understand that not everything they wanted they could get. There would be some items on Minister Jay Ebanks' Christmas list that they just could not afford to buy.

Mr. Speaker, we went eight years without borrowing one cent to fund capital projects. Not one; and the contingency that we put in place, was not to allow us if we had been back in Government or any other Government, to go spend willy-nilly on capital projects as though Government was way in the black. Our concern was to ensure continuity of government if the worst scenario that we could consider, did occur; but in the first two years of their term, they are proposing to spend

even \$20 million more than we had originally agreed as contingency borrowing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask: *Where is the money going to come from to repay this loan?* I looked to see what specific financial strategies were in place to ensure an increase in revenue. Mr. Speaker, all I can conclude from the absence of it in the document, because I have been around government a long time, is that they have simply adopted the old way of going about this, where you presume that there would be year on year growth, in terms of government revenue. I do not know how anyone could come to that conclusion in the present global environment.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to tempt your patience some more, sir. There is an article in *The Economist*, 3 days ago (28<sup>th</sup> November), entitled: *Between a rock and a hard place, which bears reading—and I brought two copies this time.*

Sarjeant, may I ask you to hand this to him?

#### "THREE THREATS TO GROWTH IN EMERGING MARKETS

"Tightening American monetary policy, slowing China and the Omicron variant

"The news, as the second anniversary of the pandemic nears, could be better. The emergence of a COVID-19 variant, labelled Omicron, has sparked a wave of selling on financial markets, seemingly on concern that a new highly transmissible strain of the virus could set back economic recoveries worldwide. *Yet, even if Omicron proves manageable, 2022 will probably be an economically trying one, as countries are squeezed between two formidable economic forces: tighter American monetary policy and slower growth in China.*"

*"America and China loom over the global economy. Together they account for 40 per cent of global GDP of market exchange rates. The two giants tend to influence other economies in different ways, however. For many emerging countries, strong growth in America is a double-edged sword. The expansionary effect of its household spending is often overshadowed by the effect of its monetary policy given the critical role of the dollar and treasury bonds in the global financial system.*

*Tighter American monetary policy is often associated with a declining global risk appetite. Capital flows towards emerging markets tend to ebb. A strengthening dollar reduces trade flows because of the greenback's role in trade invoicing.*

*China's effect on the world is more straightforward. It is by a large margin, the world's biggest consumer of aluminium, coal, cotton and soybeans—among other commodities—and a major importer of goods ranging from capital equipment to wine. When china falters, exporters around the world feel the pain.*

*The year ahead will not be the first time economists have been forced to navigate the treacherous*

waters between the two dangers. In the mid-2010s, vulnerable, emerging markets were squeezed by a rising dollar as the Federal Reserve withdrew the monetary support provided during the global financial crisis. While a badly-managed round of financial market liberalisation and credit tightening triggered the slump in China, growth across emerging markets, excluding China, sagged from 5.3 per cent in 2011 to just 3.2 per cent in 2015. The squeeze this time could well be more painful.

In the 2010s a weak recovery and stubbornly low inflation forced the Fed to go slow. More than 2.5 years elapsed between the Fed's announcement of its intention to reduce its asset purchases and the first rise in its policy rate. This time around, by contrast, the 12 months following the Fed's announcement of its plan to begin tapering in November, are likely to involve a complete halt to bond buying, and according to market pricing, at least two interest rate rises.

China, for its part, seems at greater risk of a hard-landing today, than it was a half-decade ago. Then the government responded to slackening growth by opening the credit taps, helping re-inflate a housing bubble. The property market has since become only more overextended and the debt loads of households and firms have risen. Economic officials now deliver regular ominous warnings about the adjustment ahead. Though, the IMF still forecasts that China will grow by 5.6 per cent in 2022 that would, with the exception of 2020, be the lowest rate since 1990. China's importance for the global economy has only increased since the 2010s and the world remains vulnerable to shocks.

Debt loads soared during the pandemic. The continued spread of COVID-19 is likely to place further demands on governments. Analysis of past episodes of Fed tightening, suggests that an increase in interest rates prompted by strong American demand is modestly beneficial to emerging economies on a sound macroeconomic footing but for more fragile economies, it can be destabilising.

In order to assess which places face the biggest squeeze from tighter American monetary policy, the Economist has gathered data on a few key macroeconomic variables for 60 large economies, both rich and developing. Large current account deficits, high levels of debt and of short-term debt owed to foreigners especially; rampant inflation and insufficient foreign exchange reserves all spell trouble for economies facing fickle capital flows as American policy tightens. Combining countries performance on these indicators yields a vulnerability index on which higher scores translate into greater fragility. The pressure is already on in some places.

Argentina, which tops the list, faces an inflation rate above 50 per cent, and a deepening economic crisis. Turkey's fundamentals look a little better, but its woes are compounded by the government's stubborn desire to lower interest rates in the face of soaring

prices; the lira has been hammered, losing nearly 40 per cent against the dollar in 2021, diminishing the purchasing power of Turkey's wages and pensions.

Very high debt loads in some rich countries push them onto the list. Markets typically extend the reach—that line is missing but, in other words, give them more breathing room—but if global financial conditions tighten substantially, then European leaders may need to do more to persuade punters that Greece will not be allowed to fall into serious trouble. Among big emerging economies, Brazil looks most vulnerable.

Ranking the same 60 economies by their exports to China as a share of their own GDP, yields an index of vulnerability to the mainland. Many of the biggest exporters to China, like Singapore and South Korea, are critical links in manufacturing supply chains. They should be untroubled as China's domestic economy slows, as long as Americans keep shopping. Flagging Chinese growth could batter Australia, which exports resources to China and Germany, whose industrial equipment firms depend heavily on Chinese customers; but at greater risk are the poor commodities' exporters that have helped feed China's population and provide for its building boom.

This gauge of exposure to China can then be compared with our measure of vulnerability to American monetary policy tightening. Some countries fates are more linked to one of the giants than the others. Others, such as Brazil and Chile, appear most likely to suffer from a double whammy. Despite high levels of debt and soaring inflation, high commodity prices have enabled Brazil to just about maintain investors' confidence. A softening Chinese economy could deprive Brazil of that benefit leading to a tumbling currency, even higher inflation, and the possibility of economic crisis. Conditions might worsen if tighter American monetary policy exacerbates a Chinese slowdown.

Though China's enormous pile of foreign exchange reserves provides it with a buffer, it has also received large financial flows over the past two years and have boosted the value of the Yuen.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, what page are you on?

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Page six, sir.

**The Speaker:** Page six.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Yup. Almost finished.

**The Speaker:** And which... page six...

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** The numbers are in the right hand corner, sir.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Yes. I am trying to find out which paragraph you are on.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I am on...

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Well, read until you begin a new paragraph if you intend to continue reading this article because I am going to take the evening's break.

**The Speaker:** We will take the evening suspension until 7 o'clock.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Yes, sir. I will be finished in two minutes, sir.

**Proceedings suspended at 6:04pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 7:12pm**

**The Speaker:** In two minutes?

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Yeah—or less.

Proceedings are resumed; the Member from Red Bay continuing.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Yes. Okay.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** *Conditions might worsen if tighter American monetary policy exacerbates the Chinese slowdown. Though China's enormous pile of foreign exchange reserves provides it with a buffer, it also it has also received large financial flows over the past two years which have boosted the value of the Yuen.*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Global Bank's claims on China surged by nearly \$200 billion from 2020 to 2021 to nearly \$1 trillion. A sudden unwinding of those flows could lead to a sharp depreciation, not unlike the one that destabilised markets in the mid-2010s.*

Mr. Speaker, when we took the evening break I had concluded reading a rather lengthy, and somewhat technical, article from *The Economist* entitled "Three threats to growth in emerging markets", the three threats being:

- Tightening American monetary policy;
- Slowing China; and
- The Omicron variant.

*The emergence of Omicron adds fresh uncertainty. Little is known yet about the economic damage that the variant might wreak. As equity prices tumbled on November 26, investors nudged down their expectations of the pace of American rate rises next year, but this may not bring much respite to weak economies. Many currencies tumbled against the dollar amid a flight to safety. That, if it continues, is not dissimilar to the effects of sustained American monetary tightening. If Omicron were also to depress trade and growth, then its spread will further amplify the pressures facing vulnerable economies. The sailing will be anything but smooth."* [PARTIALLY VERIFIED]

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the point of reading it and referring it to the Government, in particular the Premier and the Minister of Finance for their consideration, is that it and an increasing number of other articles being written by economists point to a significant slowdown, if not worse, of the global economy. We know very well, Mr. Speaker, that whatever happens, particularly in the United States, will have a knock-on effect here. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition in his presentation spoke to the significant 6.2 per cent increase in inflation published in relation to the United States.

Mr. Speaker, the point of me ready that rather technical and lengthy article is to say that all the indicators currently available are saying that we are in for a very uncertain time, and proposing a budget with massive borrowing, with deficits predicted for the current year and next year, and the smallest of surpluses predicted for 2023, can only be described, in my view, as reckless.

Thus, we believe, [that] the budget that has been presented places Cayman's Government's finances and the broader economy at real risk when you consider, that during our eight years in Office we reduced national debt from \$560 million in 2013 to under \$250 million when we demitted office—a reduction of over \$300 million or more than 55 per cent, and in one fell swoop, this Government is proposing to increase the national debt to more than \$400 million.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I will pause there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this "borrow and spend" approach to government finances is not a financial strategy; it is one that hopes, at best hopes, that without doing anything otherwise, Government will have the benefit of year-on-year increases in revenue, which in the current global environment seems highly unlikely, not just because of global conditions, but because of the clear indications it continues to give, that it intends to slow development and make it more difficult to get things like work permits.

**The Speaker:** Member, do you intend to use your full time?

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Sir, I shall speak until I either cover all my points or run out of time; whichever comes first.

As I said before: the Government will only be able to support the broad socialist policies they are articulating if it has the means to do so and the current approach is not likely to provide those means.

Mr. Speaker, all of us in this House have heard the concerns Caymanians express. You know, Caymanians' resentment at not getting what most consider as a fair share of the economic pie and the opportunities—and not just over the course of the last two terms. This Opposition, which was Government for two terms, understands that well and did our best in the time we had to try to level the playing field by putting in place a number of measures, many of which were rehearsed in this House during various Ministers' and indeed, some of the Parliamentary Secretaries' debates.

So, Mr. Speaker, we generally do not take issue with much of what the Government is proposing, in terms of programmes and projects.

Our fundamental concern with this budget is how the Government is proposing to fund it; and the Government's apparent lack of concern about how it will continue to generate the revenue, over time, to fund this and other budgets.

My colleague, the Member for George Town North addressed the misleading statement in the Premier's speech about Local Companies Control Act waivers, Mr. Speaker, so I am not going to go into that; but there is an equally misleading statement about concessions, because the Government's case is that by virtue of a range of these various measures, which they attribute to our Administration...By the way, the Premier was Minister of Commerce and Minister for Financial Services in one of those Administrations, so he should know better than to say some of the things he said. I guess somebody else wrote that and he had to say it.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to concessions, when we took Office in 2013, the unemployment rate for Caymanians was at 10.5 per cent. The Minister of Finance at the time, Mr. Marco Archer, and I met with delegations of people from various industries—some even made presentations to Caucus; begging us to do *something* to get development moving, because businesses were failing; people were unemployed. It was on that basis that our Government took a policy decision to offer concessions to developers to incentivise them to get on with developments *then*, not years down the road.

Many of these major projects take years to complete. Absent those concessions, many of those projects would never have gotten started, so when one takes Government policies out of the context in which they were developed and implemented, you get misleading statements such as those which the Premier read from his speech, and give people—or perhaps that is what it was intended to do—the impression that somehow the Progressive-led Administrations of the last eight years were all about helping out developers.

Yeah, we helped out developers because they were employing Caymanians; they were buying goods and services in Cayman; they were stimulating the local

economy. Look at our last Administration and see how many concessions we granted then. The few that you will see, were continuations of earlier ones where the projects were not completed. It was a deliberate strategy, an economic tool we used—one of the few Cayman has—to stimulate development and economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, I am fearful that the approach this Government is taking is going to see us with increased unemployment [and] failing businesses. [That] the vicious cycle is going to set in, where Government's revenue continues to reduce and Government's ability to help those who most need it, when they most need it, is going to be impaired because there is no financial strategy, at least none articulated in this House, to ensure our economy's continued growth. Listen to those who tell you, *oh we don't need any more economic growth*; listen to them you hear, and see where we wind-up.

Mr. Speaker, as you have said many times in the years that I have been in this House, *you either embrace wealth or we will reap poverty*. I do not know how many on the other side are old enough to know when for most people, being in Cayman and being a Caymanian meant you were poor, but I am old enough to know—I am old enough to know. Many people think this just come 'ya so. I know. I remember well when three or four families were the ones who had anything at all to speak of, and where my people come out from, in East End and Bodden Town, most of them had nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I honestly did not hear very much articulated here in terms of policies and programmes or even projects which I would not be able, in appropriate circumstances, to support. In fact, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when I close my eyes, except for the change in voice, it sounded like Members on the other side were reading from some of the speeches that we made in this House over the last eight years in relation to policies and programmes.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, in seven months they developed all of that? I think the Honourable Minister of Finance was quite honest in his opening [when] he said:

*We build on foundations we did not lay,  
We warm ourselves on fires we did not light  
We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant,  
We drink from wells we did not dig and  
We profit from persons we did not know.*

Mr. Speaker, I translated that [to]:

*We embrace policies we did not consider,  
We adopt programmes we did not develop,  
We claim projects we did not conceive; and  
We fund them all with money we did not raise.*

*[Laughter, desk thumping and inaudible interjections]*



**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** You did not know I was a poet. I was a poet, you did not know it.

*[Laughter and inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, that is not a bad thing, even though it was a bit audacious.

I think the one most guilty of that particular sin was Minister Ebanks who has been elected for five minutes and was schooling all of us on all of these projects that he developed and he was presenting on behalf of the Government. Not even his people in North Side goin' believe that—not in seven months.

Mr. Speaker, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then we on this side should consider ourselves very flattered, because I would say [that] as much as 80 per cent of what I heard presented is the continuation of projects, policies and programmes we put in place. That is good for the country, because none of us who are Ministers, very few of us, come with the background or skill to develop these policies. We have to listen to what advisers tell us, and use our political judgment on how to take them forward. That is how the business of Government works all over the world.

Unlike the early days of this Administration's tenure, when everybody was nervous because we were hearing they were going to stop this and the next thing, I feel happier and relieved, about the way forward, in terms of the various policies and programmes and projects. However, Mr. Speaker, our concern is not about that.

Our concern is about what appears to be an unwillingness to trim the cost of the projects, programmes and policies to fit with what money is available and is likely going to be available over the course of the next two years and beyond, because recurrent costs are just that—every year you have to fund those; and to borrow the massive sum of almost \$350 million for capital projects, as the Leader of the Opposition said, is a clear indication that there was no fiscal discipline employed in determining what priorities the Government would take forward in the changed and uncertain circumstances in which Cayman and the world find themselves.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen when this two-year budget term is over, and Government still finds itself with a deficit? Goin' borrow again? Because Mr. Speaker, I do not see anything in here that indicates the Government intends to grow the economy. What I see here, [and] all of us here [are] business people, is [that] we need to slow things down.

Mr. Speaker, I had hoped that the Minister for Financial Services would have spoken before I rose. Maybe he will speak. I hope he speaks after I sit down because I think we can be satisfied Mr. Speaker, that it

is going to be at least another year before our tourism industry approaches anything near what we have been used to for all of these years; thus, Financial services will be required to take an even greater role than it has all of these years, in terms of generating Government revenue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard what Parliamentary Secretary Mrs. Ebanks-Wilks said but she did not, at least I did not hear her, address the risks around the industry. I know a fair bit about them. I spent many years dealing with those, and I do hope that the Minister will tell us where we are, what the challenges currently are; and hopefully, that things are under control and there is nothing looming that is likely to do us great harm.

I am not going to speculate about any of those things. I am simply asking the Minister to tell us because it has been silence since we demitted Office. I have talked to people in the Financial Services industry as well and the reports I have is that they are not hearing very much in terms of what is going on from Government.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Listen: I have a job here, and your mouth nah goin' frighten me, you know, sir.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I can defend myself. I hope you understand that.

Mr. Speaker, in the time I have left, I want to ask that the Government address two matters.

**ReGen:** Mr. Speaker, it took us almost eight years to get the contract to where it was; to get the agreements signed. This Government has said it is committed to dealing with climate change, reducing our carbon footprint—doing things that make us much better, ecologically.

I believe them; in particular, I believe the Premier, but no single project in Cayman is more important than addressing the issue of solid waste management. We are all seeing worrying signs because of measures not being employed; we are starting to see little fires or a little smoke coming from the land fill again, over the course of the last month. That is just how it began when we wound up with that massive fire that raged on for weeks, Mr. Speaker.

There are few things the Government needs to deal with, that are more important than pushing that project forward before the space that is left available is all utilised and there is nowhere left to put solid waste. That project needs to be pushed ahead.

Mr. Speaker, another matter which is creating much concern is the issue of the **Legal Services Act**, which, although passed eight or nine months ago now, is still not in effect. That was considered a critically im-

portant piece of legislation years ago. The Premier himself attempted to bring two versions of that Bill to this House when he was the Minister in my Government, and it failed both times. I brought it, with the support of the Attorney General and we passed it. We did what I do not know how many governments have tried to do and could not get done, but it is no good passing it and it not being in effect. When it is not in effect, it is not addressing the concerns that the international community—the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU) and a wide range of them—have about the lack of proper regulation of the legal services business, in particular, lawyers.

It is not addressing the many concerns that Caymanians had about their place and opportunities in the legal profession, which wound up killing the Bill on previous occasions. Nothing is being addressed while it is sitting there in limbo, and the Government has now been in Office for seven months.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** I passed it.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** No, we could not bring it into effect because there were committees that had to be formed and the elections came more swiftly than any of us expected they would be.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. Alden McLaughlin:** Otherwise we might have gotten it done in time. Blame me all you wish, but it is your watch now, and any adverse consequences that flow from the legislation not being in effect, will be laid at your feet, not mine.

Mr. Speaker, I ask on behalf of my colleagues on this side that the Government think again about this budget and about the massive borrowing that they are undertaking. That they think again about the rhetoric that they continue with, aimed at discouraging more economic development. I am not necessarily speaking about physical but economic development.

That the Government address whatever is causing the problems with work permits being processed. Mr. Speaker, if the policy is to turn down the work permits, then do so, but do not leave people in limbo for months due to matters not being considered; because I can tell the Government now, that there is already talk of seeking judicial review of the fact that decisions are not being made.

These things have massive economic consequences for businesses when they cannot get staff, and Mr. Speaker, we are not going to re-build this economy, we are not going to rebuild tourism, we are not

going to increase Government revenue, by stopping businesses from getting workers that they need.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your patience. I am grateful for the opportunity to have made a few observations about the Government budget.

Thank you, sir.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Premier.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a long day. I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10am tomorrow morning. We will come back and take things further.

Thank you and have a good evening.

**The Speaker:** The question is that this honourable Parliament adjourn until 10am tomorrow morning.

All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it.

This honourable Parliament stands adjourned until 10am tomorrow morning.

**At 7:41pm the House stood adjourned until 10am Thursday, 2 December, 2022.**