



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Meeting of the 2021/2022 Session
Fourth Sitting

Thursday
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(Pages 1-39)

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
THURSDAY
2 DECEMBER 2021
10:58 AM
Fourth Sitting

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

I will call on the Parliamentary Secretary, the Elected Member for East End to say prayers.

PRAYERS

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, Parliamentary Secretary to Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Ministry of Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage, Elected Member for East End: 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.

The House is 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.

**Standing Orders 14(4)
Arrangement of Business**

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton, Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, Elected Member for Newlands: Mr. Speaker, in respect of today's Order Paper, there are Motions and questions listed which we would like to move to the end of the Order Paper.

In that context I would move the Motion in accordance with Standing Orders 14(4) to change the order of business on the Order Paper to move the questions set out in six and the Motions set out in 11 to the end of the Order Paper.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yes, thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The question is that the Order Paper be rearranged to allow Government Business to continue.

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

AYES and one audible NO

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Order Paper was rearranged.

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

The Speaker: There are statements from the Honourable Premier.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO BARBADOS
RE: INDEPENDENCE**

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to note that this week the Caribbean Community and indeed, the world, has borne witness to a tremendous moment in history as Barbados has become a Republic, swearing in Dame Sandra Mason as its first President, therefore replacing Her Majesty the Queen, as its Head of State.

On the eve of its 55th Anniversary of its independence from Great Britain, Barbados has for the last time lowered the Union Jack in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and affirmed its political maturity and great aspirations as a nation by taking this major step forward.

Barbados, Mr. Speaker, has always played a central role in advancing the cause of the Caribbean Community and I think of the great contributions of Sir Grantley Adams who, as Premier of Barbados was chosen as the Prime Minister of the West Indies Federation, albeit short-lived. We should also recall Barbados' first Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Errol Barrow, QC, who expressed the deepest desires of a post-colonial Caribbean in the following way: **"I think that we in the West Indies should not be afraid to speak our minds and I think that we in the West Indies should not be looking around for somebody to lead and work out our own political and economic philosophy."**

In taking this monumental step to become a Republic, Barbados is certainly not looking around for someone else to lead. In fact, Barbados has been blessed with many exemplars and gifted leaders who have helped to lay the groundwork to become a Republic. I think of the great economic mind of the late Honourable Owen Arthur, who was a powerful voice both regionally and internationally. Many current and former Members of this Parliament had the privilege of considering the late Prime Minister, Honourable David Thompson, a friend and esteemed colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly proud to consider current Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Mia Mott-

ley, QC, a dear friend. We can all be proud as a Caribbean people of her articulate and passionate thought leadership as the world navigates threats to democracy, the climate crisis, inequality and the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In all of these things, Mr. Speaker, she has been a beacon of light and inspiration.

Having recently returned from Conference of the Parties (COP26) myself, I can personally attest to the impact and influence she has had on that global forum, ensuring that these key issues do not remain an academic or tick-the-box exercise but that the impacts on us, small and developing communities, are considered and indeed addressed.

I would like to encourage us to consider Barbados becoming a republic a giant leap forward, rather than viewing it as some sort of move away. While no longer one of the realms of Great Britain, Barbados remains a Member of the Commonwealth of Nations and of course it will continue to play a central role in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). This is an important statement and moment for all democracies around the world.

Barbados, Mr. Speaker, can truly be described as a friend to all within the region, and on this higher platform of being the world's newest Republic, I am confident that we will continue to see Barbados take an even more significant role in using their voice to shed light, especially for the smaller nations and territories around the world.

On behalf of the Government and the People of the Cayman Islands, I wish to extend warm congratulations and the very best wishes to the Government and People of Barbados; and to the many Barbadians or, as we affectionately call them—'*Bajans*', who have made the Cayman Islands home and contributed so much here, sir, we fully appreciate your abiding sense of pride, and excitement, as Barbados embarks on this new journey. Our links and ties to Barbados remain strong, and we are grateful for the positive impact that the Barbadian community has had and continues to have on the Cayman Islands.

May God continue to bless and prosper the good people of the Republic of Barbados, and may history consider this the ushering in of a new era of excellence for Barbados.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

The Speaker: The Premier.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO HONDURAS
RE: PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

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

Mr. Speaker, I thought it appropriate to make a brief statement this morning, in light of the presidential

elections in our neighbour Honduras, which had a very interesting outcome.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government and People of the Cayman Islands, I wish to offer congratulations to the people of Honduras on the election of their first female President, Xiomara Castro.

The reports of a high voter turnout, active engagement of civil society and peaceful participation during voting, are all welcomed signs of the desire and commitment of the Honduran people to the democratic process. As you are well aware Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands has strong historical and familial ties with the people of Honduras, and today we wish to assure them of our best wishes.

The election of a female president is significant and it points to the positive enhancement of one of the most important nations to the peace, stability and security of the Central American region so, Mr. Speaker, let us wish our friends and neighbours in Honduras every success.

I wish to once again congratulate President-Elect Xiomara Castro on her victory; May God continue to bless and prosper the good people of Honduras.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: None.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READING

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2022 AND 2023) BILL, 2021

(Continuation of the debate thereon)

The Speaker: Continuation of the debate on the on the budget.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] The Honourable Minister of Financial Services and Social Development.

[Pause]

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Financial Services and Commerce and Investment, Innovation and Social Development, Elected Member for West Bay South: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to this debate on the Appropriation (Financial Years 2022 and 2023) Bill, 2021. To do so is truly an honour. I continue to pinch myself as I sit on the Government bench in Parliament; as I walk these hallowed Halls and think of what a blessing it is to serve.

I often walk the Halls quietly, while others might be having a dinner break, and just look at the photos on the wall. I think of all of the former Members in the decades gone by and I often think about the challenges that they wrestled with, that were the issue of issues in their time. What challenges and problems kept them up late at night? Then I think about future generations, and if I am so blessed that my photo is on that wall, what will they say about me? How will they view my contributions? So, with all that I can and the strength that I can muster, I will try to make positive contributions as long as the people will have me here and the good Lord gives me strength.

In thinking it from that vein, I am also going to try every day to conduct myself professionally, because that is the matter that is in my complete control. No matter what other events come along—plans get disturbed, unforeseen circumstances; the best of intentions, at a minimum, I would like future generations to look upon me and say, ‘*He carried out his affairs with honesty and integrity.*’

Mr. Speaker, I took a leap of faith when I entered electoral politics with no designed backup plan and thus, I have to believe that the Lord led me here and to that end, I want to thank all of my family and friends and the people of West Bay South for believing me, in particular, my wife Tiffany; my son Jaxson and my daughter, Savanna, for their support every day. They are my rocks, and I know I would not be able to do this job without them.

Mr. Speaker, as per the Constitution of these Islands, I have been charged with the responsibility of the conduct of two Ministries:

- The Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce; and
- The Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development

I would like to thank the Premier for having the faith and confidence in me that I would be able to manage such awesome responsibilities; but Mr. Speaker, for the purposes of this contribution this poses an interesting dilemma, because I reread the Standing Orders and it is not two hours per Ministry, but two hours *per*

Member. I therefore have to decide how I can economically use my time to cover such vast space.

That led me to thinking about how I am going to actually approach this debate—whether I go through every Department and every Ministry line by line reciting budget figures, all of which will probably be ventilated in Finance Committee anyway. Do I go through the litany of examples of the challenges that we face—you know them, Mr. Speaker, just to name one: the person who is running around, from Department to Department trying to complete an application document, bouncing between government administrators just to get indigent health care coverage for a loved one who is in the hospital with cancer, waiting for the e-mail to say that they will be granted coverage three to four weeks later.

I do not know how much purpose it truly serves to go through every example, when we know those challenges. Besides, Mr. Speaker, I am an optimist, so I do not want to be tarred with the doom and gloomy brush, but I think it is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that I find myself not quite tracking the Opposition's case in this debate.

One moment there is a claim that the Premier is too gloomy, and aside from a few quibbles everything is fine because we are adopting all of their ideas; and another moment, it sounds like it is doom and gloom, the sky is falling, run for the hills, we cannot make it. Which is it? But at the same time, I also do not know if that approach works—for us to just continue trading blows.

Mr. Speaker, you know it, I know it; the Caymanian people know it: the Progressives' time was not perfect—nobody is perfect. Yes, there are good foundations, but as former Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, **“It is said reap where you have sown. That is a hard rule, a stern rule and we accept it. But we are not now reaping where we have sown, we are reaping where others have sown, where they have sown weeds as well as grain.”**

Mr. Speaker, that means that there will be a balance, but I do not know that it serves the country much value to just put forward points purely with the objective to secure political advantage. I think what the country is hungry for, and yearning for, is far sighted, solution-orientated leadership.

[Desks thumping]

Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development

Social Development

Hon. André M. Ebanks: So instead, Mr. Speaker—I do not know if my approach will be correct—but I would like to share a summary of my vision of the challenges in the area of Social Development and the prospects that I see of a vibrant economy, even if it means there

will be a few months of rough seas ahead in the short term.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, my journey to government has been multi-faceted, but one of the areas that has touched me the most, which has my stern and heartfelt commitment, rivalled only by what I feel for my family, is bringing advancement in the area of social development that is sorely lacking for our people.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Our people need to see a change here; a change that they can touch, a change that they can feel. Many governments have come to this very fork in the road and budgets have been trimmed, slashed; numbers picked out of the sky for the basic necessities of our people.

Now, the Deputy Premier can tell you that I stood my ground when it came to this budget.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I recognise the pressures that he is under; that he has to meet certain financial targets, that he has to put forward prudent and financial management, and that hard choices need to be made.

I also understand the assertion that private sector activity is important for growth; however, with widening income inequality, generational poverty, global automation, impaired access to housing and property ownership, these matters require government solutions.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I had to say to the Deputy Premier: no more. No more can we trim this side. You have to go find it someplace else, not this way. So we stand here, as a Government, ready to embark on transformative change and that is what the Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development is about.

I have said it on breakfast shows, but I think it bears repeating that to my mind, how I see it, the Ministry is a vehicle. Investment is what is going to drive the economy; the innovation is that fuel that is going to get the engine going from investment, and the passengers are the people who are in social development. Does that mean that in that vehicle there will be instruments from the former model that will be used in this one? *Yeah.* Will that mean there will be some instruments from the former model we will not use? *Probably not,* but it is a new model and a new way of thinking of how we are going to create that virtuous circle.

Mr. Speaker, you also know all too well the machinations of conducting business through public service, there are frustrations, there are stresses and that point reminded me of another quote from John Wil-

liam Gardner, who was the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare under former President Lyndon Johnson, “I must report that even excellent institutions run by excellent human beings are inherently sluggish, not hungry for innovation, not quick to respond to human need, not eager to reshape themselves to meet the challenges of the times.” [UNVERIFIED]

In the case of our civil service, as it relates to social development, I believe that sluggishness can be shaken and vigour can be restored with adequate resources. Adequate resources cost money, which means adequate budget.

Now, the Member for George Town West is quite right in asking not to have empty promises—he is correct; but that is precisely why we are gathered here today, to debate the Appropriation Bill. The difference between campaign rhetoric and delivery is the budget.

[Inaudible interjections and desk thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: For me, Mr. Speaker, it is not a financial document, it is a *values* document. It is to say to the public that the items we care so much about to deliver to you, we have assigned a monetary sum in the column next to it; and we did that in order to provide the opportunity to facilitate its achievement.

I witnessed past Ministers and Councillors make sincere efforts in Social Development, but they were out-gunned and over-matched without sufficient resources. That was a weed. With this budget, the country is presented with the opportunity to provide the resources necessary to change our social development infrastructure transformative and radically. These plans would have immediate improvements on the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU), Sunrise Adult Training Centre and the Department of Children and Family Services.

Needs Assessment Unit

Let us start with transformation of the NAU and when I refer to a plan and transformation, it is going to be thorough and it is going to be innovative in form, legislation and appearance.

Foremost, Mr. Speaker, even if it is by sheer force of will, and the last thing that I do, we are going to repeal and replace the horribly-titled *Poor Persons Relief Act*—

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: —and replace it with modern financial assistance legislation that requires benefits in exchange for work for those who are able; and work will not mean just traditional employment. It will mean any valued community service: Drive a bus to transport seniors; clean up the beach; deliver meals. Our aim is to have that legislation ready for consideration by this honourable House by the end of First Quarter (Q1) 2022.

It will also, even if it sounds like a small point, change the name of the department to the Financial Assistance Department and Mr. Speaker, I think I can speak on behalf of Parliamentary Secretary, Heather Bodden, the Member for Savannah, when I say that we are willing and able to take up the offer from the Member for George Town South, whom I thank for her comments yesterday in relation to my experience in this area. I think what the country wants to see on this legislation is to reach across the aisle and work on it together for all of our people.

If there is one piece of legislation in this country that should demand bi-partisan support, it is financial assistance for our people.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: So I am happy to sit down, share the draft with you and go through the provisions, until we get this right. And even if we go through the first iteration and that takes a year, and we find things we have to correct, we will come back again until we get it right.

[Inaudible interjections and desk thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, with the support of Parliamentary Secretary Heather Bodden, I also want to change the physical look of the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU).

I want to change the reception area to expanded premises where there is a comfortable seating area. I do not know how many Members of this House have actually walked into NAU. Have you walked in? You can hardly fit in the first place; it is tight, it is hot, it is cramped. How would you feel, walking in and you are on your last legs asking for help, and you cannot sit down?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: There is no privacy or confidentiality. Sharing your business through bulletproof glass? That cannot be right in a country of these resources—even with our challenges.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We want comfortable seating and a play area; also make it more comfortable for the staff in there, to be able to have the freedom to do their work—with new IT tools so they are not shuffling paper. A few of them know that I am also in Innovation and were a little skittish at first. I said, “*No, you are not going to lose your job. The IT that we want to put in will help you to do your job easier, so you can stop paper pushing and get studying the root causes to help our people.*”

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We already embarked on this journey. We changed the website. Now it is able to be manipulated on mobile phones rather than just sitting at a desk top, because our studies showed that most of the clients operate with mobile phones.

We are also about to embark in, and hopefully it is done before the end of the year, a completely online application so you no longer have to e-mail documents. You can type all the information on your phone and send it through, which stops paperwork on the other side for the employees; it uploads to their system and gets the process started quickly.

Application process for indigent healthcare coverage

I have a particular concern that I want to work on with the Minister of Health, and I gave the example at the outset: to reshape the application process for indigent healthcare coverage. Right now the system is absurd. The client bounces between the Needs Assessment Unit to the hospital, back to the Needs Assessment Unit, then gets checked by the Department of Children and Family Services... I remember being on staff and taking it to the former Premier to sign and he even looked at it and said, *I should not be signing this, this is a healthcare call.*

We need to amend the Health Insurance Act to change that definition, so it is signed off by a medical professional rather than the Minister responsible for Social Services.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: In this budget we also need to provide for more NAU officers. The NAU has been begging for more officers for years, and that will speed up the service.

Let me say to them: I know that they get a lot of flak in the press and sometimes they may do things that may be slightly off kilter, but it is because you are under stress. You are in a job where you are hearing everybody's worst problems every day. I know what happens. I had a job where I was a dishwasher. You get upset. You start running things through halfway because you know the boss has more money to give you more help, and you got to do twice the work. That is having an impact on our people, we've got to give them more resources.

Department of Children and Family Services

Mr. Speaker, the same follows for the Department of Children and Family Services. Right now, the Director estimates that the caseload per social worker is one social worker per 90 cases, not 19—90 cases.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: There is no human being that has the cognitive capacity to keep up with all those cases with intricate social problems and then we expect that the domestic violence stats will go down. *Really?* This budget is trying to get closer to the international standard, which is 1 to 35. I did my best with the Deputy Premier to try to at least get this down 1 to 50 so that we can start to show how that can make an improvement for our social workers.

There is also a need to modernise the adoption legislation, the Children Law and other policies that they operate under. The Department of Children and Family Services are very ably assisted by hardworking folks in the non-profit sector. The problem, is that the sector is pretty segregated. They are not all working to one unified strategy for desired outcomes. The Ministry staff have already begun to coordinate them and develop a strategy to get them working together, because we have no idea whether one organisation is dropping off three meals at house A, and house B is getting none.

The Sunrise Adult Training Centre

Mr. Speaker, the next one is closer to you, to the Member for West Bay Central, the Member for West Bay North, and I. To all of us, frankly. The Sunrise Adult Training Centre, which is a Department in West Bay created and designed to provide integrated services for differently-abled adults.

To say that the facility is inadequate, is an understatement. It is bursting at the seams. The sad thing is that when you visit the facility, those differently-abled adults are ready and willing to work; and they just need that helping hand to be income-producing citizens of this country. In addition, Sunrise, because of its capacity limitations, has a waitlist, which means that there are differently abled children graduating from the Light-house School who cannot get to the next level.

They are sitting there, it is stymieing their potential and that is putting pressure on their parents who are getting no respite services. The situation is unacceptable and this budget will move to relocate Sunrise out of West Bay into a centrally located, more spacious facility that will also help the Eastern districts.

[Desks thumping]

The Way-makers Home

Hon. André M. Ebanks: This one is also near and dear to me. I am sure every Member of this House gets these calls from the person who cannot get assistance from NAU in time, is displaced from their home, cannot find a landlord to rent to them and NAU's stock of hotels that are willing to rent to their clients is shrinking. That person has nowhere to go.

Our Ministry is going to take a stock of all of the Crown assets. We have our sights at least on the first one in West Bay. The Way-makers Home, across from Scholar's Park, to turn that into transitional housing so that jam that person finds himself in, where they need that three-weeks breathing space to find shelter somewhere before an apartment or, if the Minister of Planning gets his way, we have some social housing included in his affordable housing to get them into shelter more permanently.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Now, here is the strategic point: although you might see a rise in the budget for social development compared to prior years, the strategy being deployed is that, if we can get the data, attack root causes through the Department of Family Services, get folks back to work or at least on benefits in exchange for community work, we should then—over future budget cycles—see a *decrease* in the budget for Social Development.

So this is an investment!

[Desks thumping]

Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development

Innovation

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Now, turning to Innovation.

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, I listened to an interview from former President, Bill Clinton. When asked about the challenges of political leadership he said, "You come into office with your objectives, you come into your office with your budget ready to go, unforeseen circumstances", he described it as, "*incoming fire* comes in that throws you off course from your objectives, then you still got to keep a mind for what's coming around the corner, the things that you have to prepare the country for in years ahead; ahead of the budget you are working within." [UNVERIFIED]

Mr. Speaker, we now live in a world where a car can drive itself; but in reality, it is a computer that is driving the car. Let us think that through for a moment—a computer can now see the world, make decisions, communicate and actually execute contracts. I mean, this last point is important because, if a computer can now enter into contracts, understand the terms, and do the agreement, we are now marching years ahead to a world where computers will supplant people.

We now then have to then prepare our people for the digital machine economy. In the 90s we saw a world that had the introduction of the internet, Mr. Speaker. The 2000s saw a world that had the beginning of commerce on the internet, and the 2010s saw a world where the internet was in the pocket of every person—look at all the people on their phones now—who

could be communicating with people all over the world. That also drives massive online communication of social media, online learning, streaming, and communication apps. As a network, the internet is simply a global network of computers that are in your pocket.

The next decade beyond this one, is going to see computers march, and march on to the workplace but I do not fear. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am an optimist. Cayman is in an amazing position to capitalise on these future trends. As computers continue to automate many parts of the economy, I believe our economy can be pivotal in this.

Digital ID Programme

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to confirm to the Member of George Town North that I will press on with the Digital ID Programme for the future and bring necessary legislation to bring that to fruition with the aim of it being the end of Q1, 2022; however, the digital ID is just the beginning of Cayman's potential.

Cayman can layer its world class regulatory and legal framework to merge in to sophisticated Financial Technology (FINTech). You heard a bit about it yesterday, Mr. Speaker, from the Member for West Bay Central, as she is going to be taking up the charge to continue moving forward the virtual assets framework with the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority (CIMA).

Cayman Islands Monetary Authority

That is why this budget also has to give CIMA additional resources to upgrade their technology to be able to regulate in this environment, which will be completely different.

Cayman can also leverage its sophisticated accounting and risk asset management industries to capitalise on the rise of computer assets. Computers will be able to create novel asset classes that will transcend any singular market. This also touches on something that we might not even see coming. Cayman has an amazing and vibrant art and cultural community.

We can now see how we can unlock and distribute and monetise these assets at a global scale through programmable commerce, so I look forward to working with the Minister of Culture and the art community to develop a whole new line of commerce and draw activity to the Island because there are artists who want to come and share and spend with our artists and those collectors will spend money on Island.

Film studio

Mr. Speaker, on a similar vein, this is why the Minister of Tourism mentioned film and a studio. Even five or six years ago, Cayman could have not been in any real serious competition for film work. If you look at movies like Lord of the Rings, series like Game of Thrones, we do not have large mountains and hills and

valleys that are usually looked for by studios, but technology is changing that.

You can now have a digital studio on four or five acres of land that can then project any scene that you want in this world or out of this world. That means that Cayman has the ability to leapfrog into the studio business and young Caymanians are coming up to learn how to do post-production, all right here in Cayman, which opens up a completely different level of education. It opens up a completely different level of income and opportunities for our young Caymanians.

Code Cayman

This is why I have to commend non-profits like Code Cayman, which I came across when I was a Deputy Chief Officer. They came up with this sort of fancy idea to teach computer coding. At the time I was in charge of Gender Equality Policy and I thought I would give it a chance and go down. When I actually began to study what they are doing, they are teaching not just women of all ages but young Caymanians how to computer code—for free.

The reason that is important is because it is a job that is borderless. It can be done anywhere and it is a skill that our young Caymanians need to get ahead of to get forward to the future; so I look forward to bringing these ideas over to the Minister for Education to see how we can begin to integrate that in the future.

Civil Service's Innovation Collaboration Cafe

I look forward to, and thank the Deputy Governor, for getting me involved with the Civil Service's Innovation Collaboration Café, which is a cross-ministerial set of civil servants who meet from time to time to just brainstorm on the biggest ideas to the smallest ideas of how we are going to get moving forward. Whether we should go the route of Barbados and have electric buses; whether we should go the route to have continued home-working to ease traffic. From the biggest to the smallest ideas but specifically, Mr. Speaker, to touch just for a moment, on the Departments that make up innovation formally, which is the Computer Services Department, the Cyber-Security Unit and the E-Government Unit. Joining them under one Ministry is very exciting.

E-Government Unit

The E-Government Unit not only has plans for the National ID to just identify us in the room; it also wants to use it as a business tool to ease the burden of Know Your Client (KYC) that goes on between banks—and everybody would recognise it is very, very difficult, to change banks these days. Contrary to popular Hollywood opinion, it is not easy to open a bank account in

the Cayman Islands. Not even when you are Caymanian, can you switch easily.

This tool will be able to provide not just ease of access, time saving to our people, freedom of choice in the market. It also has the ability to help with our investors' KYC requirements and place Cayman on the cutting edge of this technology. And it is the E-Government Unit that deserves a special mention, which is helping the Needs Assessment Unit to modify their website their technology. The Departments are beginning to see the value of that collaboration; that link between innovation and social development.

Computer Services Department

Mr. Speaker, I also want to mention particularly, and I think the Deputy Governor should take note of this: the Computer Services Department. They are the unsung heroes of the Civil Service. The COVID experience for the Civil Service, would have been very, very different if we did not have an efficient Computer Services Department; so I thank them for their service.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: That enabled enough of a proof point to put money in the budget, to grant them essential software and hardware that they need to continue their valued service.

Cyber Security Unit

Turning to the Cyber Security Unit. Sitting in the National Security Council, now more than ever I see the value of that Unit; to protect us from cyber threats as we now move into this digital space. There is a whole other world of danger out there. This is one of those items in the budget that I feel is just a definite. Without them, if we get attacked it is game over. They are there to protect and defend the Cayman Islands. They are essentially our cyber police.

Investment

Investment then has a natural link from Innovation, and I hinted to it earlier in terms of film and tech, but the other interesting side of film—and I am looking forward to working on this with the Deputy Premier in his capacity as Finance Minister, and the Minister of Tourism—is films are sometimes attracted to other jurisdictions that have a direct-tax rebate. We, of course, have an indirect consumption model. In order to attract those productions, I am very, very excited to develop some sort of programme that carves out a rebate based on our indirect tax model, which shows the world that we do have a tax system, it is just different and still be able to attract the same set of business.

Invest Cayman Department

In terms of attracting business, I think what we have to keep in mind and this is what I stress to the Ministry, and the new Invest Cayman Department, is that we need to find investment opportunities that are not just profitable within themselves, but are profitable to the community at large; so they make money, but they also benefit the community in a real tangible way.

I see that combination in a couple of projects, and there are others, but there are some that are well on their way that just need that extra government support, like Cayman Enterprise City. This is a development that is not only there to attract tech but also build an entire community around it. I am very excited to see their plans unveiled and there are others in the pipeline.

Green Space

There is also a non-profit called Green Space that wants to create a Health and Wellness Park in George Town. The Minister for Lands and I went out and took a look. This is the kind of development—nobody is against development, but what you want is development that is not unbridled and is able to help all of the community.

Centre for Business Development

I heard the Member for George Town North raise a potential concern about the Centre for Business Development not becoming just an ATM. I am sensitive to that point because I do not want that either. I have seen tremendous successes come from the incubator programme where they are taking young Caymanians, giving them the opportunities, the tools, and the mentoring to bring their business ideas to the market.

We need to invest more in that Department to get those other returns; that intangible return, to see the smile on a Caymanian's face who brings a product to market, but that doesn't mean that in the meantime, while there are tougher months, we should not continue business stipend grants as much as possible.

Financial Services and Commerce

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to Financial Services and Commerce. The vision that we have set for this Ministry is to be recognised as a global centre of excellence in financial services and recent engagements that the Governor referred to in his Throne Speech, in attending Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) in London and then going to Brussels, have reinforced in my mind, why we have to engage early and often, and even when there is not a problem.

I think it is one of the weeds that we have to course correct, as I think that there is a view in Europe that Cayman only comes forward to engage when there is a problem in legislation; where there is an obstacle

that we are seeking to navigate. We have to get beyond that. We have to engage in sustained dialogue. It is not their job to know us, it is our job to educate them about us.

We need to be proactive. We cannot just sit and wait for legislative changes or legislative proposals that we know are coming around the corner, that you can see building two years away, sitting and hoping it does not happen and backing us into a corner, only to get down to legislation being passed in a hurry with strained consultation and different parts of the industry arguing with each other. We need to identify these global trends. We need to get ahead of them, design them for ourselves so when they come we are in place and ready to go.

We do have a challenge. One of the weeds is that we are on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List and that has the knock-on consequence, being on that list from January of this year, to being automatically listed on the European Union's (EU's) Anti Money Laundering (AML) list; but I am very, very encouraged by the three-point plan that has been set forward by the Ministry for Financial Services in conjunction with the Attorney General, the National Coordinator, the Anti-Money Laundering Unit to address the three reasons why we are on the FATF's Grey list.

One, is already complete, we are chipping away at the second reason, and we have a plan for the third. So in the event that we are not off the FATF Grey List before the EU strikes its list, we then hopefully are in a position to make the case to the EU that the reasons that we used to be on the list are either nil or very little. So we would try to put forward the argument that, *you have lost the rationale to put us on your list* but in my discussions in Brussels on Friday, 19th November, even if that were to occur, what I wanted to understand is: if that does occur, how do we get off the EU AML list, and we had a very engaging dialogue of how they were willing to meet with us, and work through what other difficulties they see to give us the opportunity to take the appropriate measures and course correct to get off their list, because I wanted to make the point to them that Cayman does not seek illicit finance. Does not seek unsound business. We seek to be a global partner, not a global problem.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: And as far as I could see, they were receptive. This is why I cannot really subscribe to some people's view that certain regions should just be written off because you are not getting business from them. At the end of the day, the world has gotten smaller, Mr. Speaker. These regional bodies also sit in other international organisations that we have to communicate with so there is no running from them. The only thing that you can do is to have dialogue as a mature democracy, through diplomacy and constructive dialogue.

Global Minimum Tax

Mr. Speaker, shifting to tax matters for a moment. I am surprised that no Member is on their phone when I say “tax”. This is interesting; so you all are interested, you are not on your phones. I will not bore you too much but, it is relatively simple: our position as a country is that taxes should be paid where they are owed. We have never wanted anybody’s tax money. We are not trying to take it from them.

We believe the global tax measures that support trying to address global problems are correct. I felt a sense of greater understanding when I joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Inclusive Framework working group calls in which the global minimum tax proposal is discussed.

It is interesting because you are on a zoom call with 130 countries and you can see that it is not necessarily that they are trying to target any particular country because they do not like you—it is much more macro than that. They see widening income inequality themselves. They see global climate change. They want a unified tax code that they can rely on to have the funds (as we are here talking about the budget) to address those problems. We need to help them with that, not run away from it, because we have nothing to hide.

Therefore, my response to those tax measures—it is a good thing that our Department of International Tax Cooperation already sits in these groups and has regular dialogue—is that we need to feed in to the rules as they are being made, so they understand our regime and the rules are tailored accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, specifically on the issue of the global minimum tax, there are two pillars:

1. Is in relation to **digital tax**—Cayman is not really in that business so that one is largely not of huge concern to us, because that is not our model; and
2. Which puts in the global minimum tax of 15 per cent; our analysis is that there is limited impact:
 - i. Because that is targeted towards multinational enterprises and we do not seek that business; our business is more institutional, so there is a limited amount of entities here.
 - ii. We do not have the double taxation agreements that other jurisdictions have, which is causing the friction that they are concerned about how you can trade your tax position. We do not have that.

Our products are tax neutral which is our investment fund regime (which is the bread and butter of Cayman’s financial services) is carved out from pillar two and unaffected, because its tax neutrality is recognised. We now have to be able to explain that same

model in other products to the world, so they can actually see that, *Cayman is not harming us*.

If there is an entity here and they are required to pay a top-up tax in another jurisdiction, so be it. If we now enter into the tax fray and charge our own tax and we are taking money out of their mouths, all we want is to facilitate capital going through and create tax revenue in other countries. We are happy to receive ours indirectly through fees, so there is nothing to fear, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, [during] one of the meetings that I had in London, from a top investment funds association [sic] said, “*Look, I have done an interview for this association*” and the UK Branch said, “*Look, things are tougher because you are not as well understood in Europe, but you are more understood in the US*”. So the US chapter said, “*When you see the Minister in London, tell him [that] from the US perspective, Cayman is fine. We understand. We know the business. We know it is regulated. We know it is proven. We know it is tried and tested.*”

In my opinion, from what I have seen so far the future is optimistic, Mr. Speaker; but there is one shift in strategy that I think needs to occur. The other weed is that there has been a lot of regulatory legislation coming at the industry from all over the place.

What we need to do is get back to the strategy that the Premier deployed when he was the Financial Services Minister, where we had a balance of the regulatory and the commercial activity legislation so that the industry gets a bit of both; so they are happy (well, happy might be a strong word), they are managing regulation but they also need work that is going to help improve the economy. Keep Cayman cutting edge [and] have good news to say to investors, because they swallowed a lot and bust them and all the regulators for what Cayman has had to do to prove itself—but the proof is in the pudding, Mr. Speaker.

In this session, my maiden Bill of legislation faithfully, or coincidentally, happens to be a new part to the Companies Law for restructuring insolvent liquidations, which is a proposal that I was working on the staff under that Minister between 2013 and 2017 Administration that has just sat on a shelf, and I cannot believe I am sitting here for me to pass that.

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We need to get back to that balance; that complement between regulatory and business—sound business. So there are more enhancements on the way. We have enhancements in the pipeline for next year for our Insurance Act, Trust Act, Companies Act, Exempted Limited Partnership Act, so that the industry has more products and tools to be proud of, and generate stronger business.

Green and Blue finance

We also have to look carefully into the area of green and blue finance; so yes, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the reports of trying to get the Commonwealth Climate Growth Fund to fruition. That as a tool in itself, is a strong symbol, but I hold the belief, and the Ministry will be working with the Monetary Authority, that there are investment funds registered here that are already in that business.

We need to tell the world that story; that this is Cayman's contribution to the war on climate change. We, in it of ourselves and our capacity, if we go and do all the wonderful things of carbon neutral solid waste which we all need to do, the world might still look and say, *Ah, given your size, that doesn't really make a dent in the overall world of climate change.* When I attended the JMC with the Governor, the challenge from the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William was, *how is each of you as overseas territories going to do your part in climate change?*

If Cayman has mastered bringing in investment funds to the market that are recognised as tax-neutral, we need to be able to carve out and identify who is in that space, to tell the world that story, so we can explain our tax model in a setting that the world can actually understand and then develop that product even further so that we become the home of that here. That is a natural avenue for the Cayman Islands Financial Services Industry to grab the bull by the horns and jump on it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you also see in this budget that we are going to be pushing for increased Information Technology (IT) to manage workloads in all of the regulators and the departments, because we need to be able to make conducting business easier for the industry and also make the assessments done by the department's regulators more efficient.

Now, I heard Mr. Speaker, a charge last night of silence. It is interesting, because since the election, I have attended several conferences in person and virtually on investment management and other areas; I have conducted several radio interviews, TV interviews, discussions and round table discussions with industry heads but, the financial services industry is vast. There are different mediums, different ways of distribution, so I cannot profess to have seen and reached everyone, but what I will say is—and I mentioned this point to the industry a little after the election—recognising that Government does a lot of work behind the scenes, but perhaps does not communicate it as much as they should.

Cayman Finance

I am working with Cayman Finance as they work through how they might restructure themselves and [I] want to toss out an idea to think about: They are a company that has to have a Board of Directors managing the business of the company; that is appropriate,

but whether or not what should be perhaps created within there is a Council of Associations. So all the associations come to a roundtable with the Minister and meet periodically—whether it is every six weeks—so that we can exchange views on issues and they can hear from themselves the level of engagement. Because I have been on the other side of the industry, the Premier has, many other Members of this House have, and if you do not necessarily hear [from] Government, you might just assume that nothing is happening, when the reality is that a lot is happening, but sometimes you just do not have the time to make that turn to communicate it. So I will be looking to work with Cayman Finance and all of the key associations, to figure out how we can have that round table discussion so that information flows, because it also enriches the discussion.

Separate think-tank

The Honourable Attorney General made a suggestion in Cabinet which I think was a good one. It was whether apart from, say, a Council of Associations, there needs to be a separate think tank. Folks who are not in the day-to-day horse race, who are long in the tooth, helped pioneer this industry, with some of the young individuals, to think about the next 10 years; so not the current fights, but how we are going to now take our Financial Services Industry and leapfrog it to the next decade. I have some thoughts in my mind of individuals who might sort of fit that—who are long Cayman and would lay down on the road for this country—and have them feeding ideas and assist Government.

Mr. Speaker... Actually, I am not doing too badly on time.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Department of Commerce

Hon. André M. Ebanks: However, I will say this because I do not believe in talking just for talking sake. There are other entities to go through. I do not want to forget Commerce and the wonderful work that the Department of Commerce does. We have some interesting legislation and new ideas in the future for them.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services and Commerce, the Member for West Bay Central spoke about the statutory authorities and their work. Oftentimes they can be overlooked because they are not part of the core civil service, but they are still public servants working hard on the front lines. I would like to thank all of them. I will have a special mention for CIMA in this session when I lay their 2020 report, so I will leave that part for a moment.

National Maritime Secretariat

I also want to mention or maybe just piggyback on the Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services

and Commerce's comments on the Maritime Authority. This is a future growth strategy: we are going to fund a National Maritime Secretariat and that can also drive commercial growth in the area of maritime which, when you think about it, we should have done long time—we come from a seafaring history. It does not make sense that we have not tried to commercialise the maritime and the sea. There are exciting opportunities there. There will be a massive piece of legislation, which is the Merchant Shipping Act, but that will also present opportunities.

Civil Aviation Authority

Also the Civil Aviation Authority; I do not know if anybody has ever gotten a chance to see their work, but it is amazing the level of clientele, the level of due diligence that they have of folks who are on their planes flying the Cayman flag. Mr. Richard Smith and his team are incredible, just as Mr. Walton's are at the Maritime Authority.

Cayman Islands Stock Exchange

There are also opportunities that we need to look at as a country as to how we are going to take the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange to the next step. It has been profitable, it does not require government resources, but we need to start thinking about it and so far the CEO, a former Member of this Honourable House, Marco Archer, and one of the board members have come forward to the Ministry to have just that sort of thought leadership of ways in which we might be able to provide more equity listings so that our own people can invest in some of our local businesses and create local economic activity. I am very excited to be working in that space.

Mr. Speaker, a number of other points will come forward in the cut and thrust of Finance Committee, but I think it suffices to say that there is, in my view, a real prospect for Cayman having a vibrant economy.

I want to thank every staff Member in both Ministries for seeing the vision. I would like to thank all of the Statutory Authorities for their hard work. I feel fortunate to be supported by two outstanding Parliamentary Secretaries; ITs; the Member for Savannah—sometimes called the Queen of Savannah, because she seems to be everywhere in Savannah working on social development, working with our seniors.

I am impressed by the level of intellect by the Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services and Commerce, the Member for West Bay Central. I am excited about the projects that will be delegated to her; that she is going to lead. I have told both of them that in this capacity they should know what I know, so if I have to go somewhere or Lord forbid there is a sickness, they can step right up.

Speaking of an absence, there is one point I want to spend a little bit of time on, Mr. Speaker: Although it is a tremendous honour to represent Cayman on an international stage and let, hopefully in the eyes of many, see the value of Cayman. I think about it every time I go to a meeting, either as a representative or in this capacity, to ensure that from the little things—that you look neat; that you talk properly; that you engage in diplomacy, because those folks are looking at you as that one example of how your country looks, and one misstep could then tarnish the entire reputation of the country.

However, it has a drawback, Mr. Speaker. You are then out of your constituency, you are out of Cayman, so I want to spend a few moments on West Bay South and I promise it is tied to the budget.

There was an unexpected surprise, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to tell the country that one of the things that I did not look forward to and did not think I would relish as part of the electoral process, was campaigning. I saw it as a potentially unpleasant experience that was a means to an end to get to work on policy.

[Laughter]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I could not have been more wrong, Mr. Speaker.

It touched me. You begin to connect with your people in a real visceral way. You begin to understand their problems. You begin to talk with them. You learn things from them. You pay attention. You learn history; you learn things potentially in the future; you learn things about the past that can help you with the future. You learn things that your granddaddy did that maybe you are not so proud of, but you...

[Laughter]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: You sit and listen. You learn something that maybe your grandmother did, that is something to be proud of. It is kind of a surreal feeling, to walk into somebody's house and they take a look at you and say, *yeah, I just want to see if you look like a granddad, okay, you got my vote.* It is surreal; it brings you back to your past. I truly enjoyed it.

My point is, when I am out of the country or even here in Parliament, I miss them. I miss West Bay South, and if our plans come to fruition and we are able to lower the cost of living and I can actually afford to comfortably move back to buy property in West Bay South, I will be moving back. My wife is ready for it.

We made a compromise through marriage that with her Savannah blood, to be nearer to the family when we got married. I think I put in my time and I think, once we can comfortably afford it—you get those affordable houses going Planning Minister—we will get back to West Bay South.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We will see about Salt Creek—but what that means is to be on the spot, and I am so proud of our West Bay South Constituency Office and how they handle things during the day for me and all of the... I used to call them campaign team but my Committee and my team. The soldiers. It is awesome to be supported, but it means working; it means listening to that constituency's feedback and bringing results.

It is a pleasure to be able to take a drive through West Bay South and West Bay Central with the Planning Minister, looking at roads that need to be identified which have been plaguing people. Pedestrian cross signs that need to be put up. We can talk all day long about global tax, but if you are not getting a chance for a child to cross the road safely between the parking lot and Church, you are not doing your job.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We need to address areas that are potentially low-lying flooding because of development. There are stalwarts like Mr. Ken Jackson, that every time he sees me he says, *you goin' get to that flooding? I'm telling you, you don't do something with those roads, it could flood.* We need to listen to their feedback. These are people who have given their lives in this community and more importantly, know what they are talking about.

We need to finish and beautify St. Mary's Cemetery on Willie Farrington Drive—we started. Supported by the Planning Minister, again, we have put down gravel. This is where people are coming to rest their loved ones for eternity. They have to be able to visit there and know that it is happening with dignity. Mr. Speaker, you and I attended a funeral there not too long ago. We can do better. We have to beautify that cemetery.

I am very pleased so far with the reaction of the Public Works Department (PWD), jumping to the scene and looking and saying, *yeah, Minister; yeah, we missed this one. We got to get this one right.*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, you have been around long enough to know that no Minister gets everything he or she wants from a budget, but do I feel that I pushed the Minister for Finance enough for adequate funding so that the mission that the Ministry staff and the Departments and I have in our head has a chance of coming to fruition? I do, sir!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: It is a serious point because the vision is modernised social assistance; an Island of innovation with new veins of investment that are hold-

ing and branching off from a globally respected financial service centre of excellence that is a global partner to the world. That is Cayman. That is where we are going to be. We are going to get past these stumbling blocks. There will be medicines; there will be protocols; there will be things to learn. We are going to get past this.

This is nothing for us to continue to quibble about and not recognise how we are looking. From my perspective, from just travelling [and] listening to what other jurisdictions are having to go through, I am happy to come home—even with the current challenges. We have to look at things in relative terms. Yes, we have to debate. Yes, we have to try to find solutions but, Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands are blessed and I am proud to call it home.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I am ready to work. Work with this team of independents and constructively across the aisle to take the good ship Cayman from strength to strength. So help me God, Mr. Speaker, with the support of this team of free-thinkers, we will bring forward transformative change.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, I am ready to work with this Premier. I am sure that in all of our lives there are non-blood related persons that you might consider a mentor; a point where the bond grows so strong you think of the person as either an aunt or an uncle. There are a few persons in life that fit that category for me and the Premier is one of them.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: The Member for Newlands. Is that clear enough for you?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: We have been in some policy and legislative predicaments. We have helped each other personally. We have successfully been able to navigate those predicaments, even when sometimes we have a difference of opinion on them; but I know exactly where his heart is. I know he does not sleep as adequately as he should.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: He does not eat the way that he should, because he spends every waking moment thinking about this country, its problems, how we are going to solve them and move it forward and advance.

I said it to you before, in my capacity as a civil servant, that I thank you for your service; but I am so excited to see you move forward and lead this team and I am, quite frankly, tired of stating the PACT-Government, with some sort of snicker of illegitimacy. We are the Government! Full stop!

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: With every seat now occupied.

An Hon. Member: All independents.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: All independents, thinking about it so, yes, I respect where everybody else is—that is fine. We all made our choices, but it is what it is, and we have to move forward and think how we, ALL 19 Members, are going to be able to move this country forward into the next decade!

[Desks thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker with that, I thank you. God bless you, and God bless the people of the Cayman Islands.

[Desks thumping]

The Speaker: We will take the lunch suspension at this time. The House is suspended until 2:00pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:26pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:14pm

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Proceedings are resumed—continuation of budget debate.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister of Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Education and District Administration and Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to inform the House about several different aspects as they relate to the Ministry of Education, as well as the Minister of District Administration Lands and, by extension, Water Authority.

Ministry of Education

Increased scholarships funding and Cayman Scholar Award

As it relates to Education, Mr. Speaker, I would refer first and foremost to scholarships funding of all of our Caymanian scholars at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels, in addition to the scholarship funding for those pursuing undergraduate studies in education-related fields, as well as the establishment of the Cayman Scholar Award to provide funding for two students—male and female—each year, as they pursue undergraduate studies at an Ivy League or Gold-Tiered university.

Mr. Speaker, this increased funding aims to strengthen post-secondary development pathways among our Caymanian students by easing the burden of the many local families that are in financial need to pursue tertiary education, as they seek to pursue a better educational future for their offspring.

The increased funding for those pursuing studies in education-related fields is intended to further encourage tertiary studies in this sector, which is crucial to our nation's development. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, students pursuing overseas undergraduate studies will receive a maximum of \$30,000 Cayman Islands (CI) per annum, from the Ministry of Education commencing the 1 September 2022.

Students pursuing the overseas undergraduate studies who qualify for the Caymanian scholarship award, will receive up to \$100,000 CI funding per annum from the Ministry of Education, and I am happy to receive the full support of the PACT Government in this regard. Additionally, students pursuing overseas post-graduate studies will begin to receive \$35,000 CI per annum in funding from the Ministry as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to advise this honourable House about the recent widening of post-secondary scholarship funding to include students pursuing first-year qualifications in the IB Diploma Programme, the AP Advanced Placement Programme, and the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE). This is intended to provide much greater assistance to our Caymanian students and parity across the education system, Mr. Speaker,

Other enhancements to the scholarship programme in 2021, include:

- The provision of funding to support the award to Caymanian scholarship recipients, of a single payment of \$1,500 towards the cost of obtaining student VISAs at the Canada or United States of America embassies, so that they can attend educational institutions in those countries;
- The temporary waiver of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) requirement for students who initiated studies in US-based institutions this fall;
- The broadening of the scholarship award to include full tuition funding for all our Caymanian students pursuing advanced (A-level) studies at the Catholic or Cayman Prep Schools throughout the prescribed two years of study. (Mr. Speaker, there was a situation whereby funding was granted but just for the one year, although it is a two year course; once we sought the support of the Government, and indeed we received it, this year we were able to extend that programme to enable the students to have their A-levels covered for the entire two years.);

- The removal of the requirement for dual entry A-level applications to provide greater ease of transition among the dual-entry students;
- The increase of means threshold for annual income, and the removal of the net-worth requirement. (Basically, the Government saw it fit to remove another hurdle, the Financials Means Test, which we found was one of the unintended consequences of providing a block for some of our Caymanian students. In fact, they were almost being penalised because their parents have been successful; although they performed well in their academic studies they were not able to access these funds, so we removed most of those hindrances);
- The upgrade of the Scholarship Application Portal to enable awareness to learn about the various Education Council Scholarship Programmes. We are also able to verify the eligibility for each scholarship, apply for available scholarships online, monitor the status of their application, and manage interactions throughout the life of the scholarship by uploading progress reports, receipts and other documents required by the Scholarship Secretariat for the disbursement of the funds. (This is another area where I gave the directive to the Scholarship Secretariat through the senior team in the Ministry to make the scholarship application process a bit more user-friendly, so it did not require that you were a Philadelphia lawyer to be able to even access the scholarship platform.)

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the reinstatement of funding to registered private schools. In addition to the numerous enhancements to our scholarship programmes, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education has reinstated, with the support of the Government, it's funding to the registered private schools in the Cayman Islands. Previously, private schools that were part of the Private School Association received funding from the Cayman Islands Government.

This funding was reduced from \$2 million to \$1 million due to various budget cuts in 2020 and 2021 financial years. In December 2020, however, the funding model was changed to a project-based funding model where schools, both public and private, could apply for additional funding as needed. Reinstating \$2 million per year will allow our private schools, Mr. Speaker, to implement needed projects and programmes at the various schools.

These private schools are indeed important to the education process, in that they provide an opportunity for students to continue to study in the jurisdiction because the true fact, Mr. Speaker, is that, not now or before, the government schools do not have adequate physical capacity or the requisite Human Resources

(HR) to cater to the over-9,000 students currently in our jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 20 months, the Ministry of Education has issued a range of guidance and policies to all compulsory education institutions to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Education issued a policy guidance to all compulsory education institutions to ensure that teaching and learning continued during the mandatory school closures in 2020. The document presented the various parameters for school administrators to follow and specifically focus on the following areas:

- Monitoring and facilitating the health and safety of our students and staff;
- The continuity of nutrition services;
- The continuity of education instruction;
- Prioritising preparation for external examinations; and
- Preparing for the reopening of schools back in August

Also, Mr. Speaker, towards the end of the mandatory school closure in June 2020, the Ministry of Education issued general guidance for the reopening of schools and for the Early Childhood Care and Education Centres (ECCE).

The document sets out the various conditions and procedures under which the ECCE Centres and schools would reopen on site and directly address the following areas:

The conditions that were required for reopening;

- Procedures for reopening;
- Health and well-being;
- Essential actions during the return of schools;
- The ECCE Centres' health and hygiene; and
- Teaching/learning in schools (which included the ECCE centres).

Then in September of this year, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry developed new COVID guidelines for our educational institutions. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in our schools, the guidance specifically addressed the following areas:

- Scenario protocols for educational institutions;
- Health and safety measures;
- Remote learning, readiness, assessment and guidance; and
- Safeguarding our children in the remote learning environment.

The scenarios outlined the steps schools should take for different situations that may occur, this included steps to be taken should a student, or indeed, a staff Member, displayed flu-like symptoms and

needed to be isolated. The health and safety measures were organised in two categories, Mr. Speaker:

The first were precautionary steps that the educational institutions should take to help keep students and staff safe. This included social distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to name a few.

The second category of health and safety measures, Mr. Speaker, were included in the mandatory guidelines that were to be implemented if and when an outbreak happened in our educational institutions.

This forward-thinking was crucial to help our educational institutions be prepared and ready. The guidance documents, although developed by our Education Ministry, were also reviewed by the medical professionals to ensure that the educational institutions were provided with guidance that was scientifically based, relevant and effective.

Therefore, the remote learning and readiness guidance document aimed to assist educational institutions to prepare for a shift from in-person learning, to remote distant learning for students, should that become necessary. It included a remote learning readiness check to ensure that institutions were prepared to effectively continue student learning should the need arise for some, or indeed all of our students, to move to remote learning. This was made possible Mr. Speaker, by providing laptops to all of our government teachers and public school students and enhancing their internet connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, we have a significant focus on child protection in our schools. The guidance document therefore included guidance on child protection matters in the event [that] institutions needed to shift to remote learning. We want to help ensure that our students are protected while at home or at school; these students are indeed our country's most precious jewels and as a government, we intend to continue to improve opportunities and protection for every student. We in the PACT-Government have embarked upon a *No-Child-Left-Behind Policy*, as we firmly believe that Community Builds Country.

One-to-One laptop initiative

The remote learning and readiness document also addresses child protection and safety; children/students' additional special needs; learning readiness; teaching and learning; administration; communication and daily checks.

As a part of its COVID-19 response, the Ministry of Education under our 1-to-1 laptop initiative, also distributed approximately 120 new iPads and 5,000 laptops to children enrolled in our government system, Mr. Speaker. Each of these devices is equipped with online learning platforms that align to the Cayman Islands national curriculum.

The Ministry further upgraded the network infrastructures, including wireless upgrades for all of our government schools, excluding CIFEC and the current

John Gray, as they were previously upgraded. We increased the Helpdesk support to facilitate student laptop distribution; we increased the bandwidth internet upgrade for all government schools to support the additional usage, and we also enhanced the security suite platform software for the staff and students devices.

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker that at the end of the school term in June/July this year, there was a discussion as to whether the students should be allowed to take home their laptops because there was probably reasonable apprehension that students perhaps would not take care of them and bring them back and I took an executive decision that the students would be allowed to take their laptops home. It was an opportunity for parents and teachers to have that tripartite relationship where they taught the children responsibility and accountability.

I am very glad to say that they came back to the new school term with their laptops. They are excited to be in possession; it provided a sense of parity and equality, and a level playing field that they no longer felt like a second-class child in a Caymanian classroom, as they all had the same laptops based on their school age and the level of academic performance and anticipation.

Procurement of masks for schools

Mr. Speaker, moving on to procurement of masks for our schools. From last year, I have been keeping up with world affairs and, following what was happening with COVID, I instructed my team to acquire masks for all our students and teachers. It was slightly delayed for fear that perhaps it might send the wrong message; nonetheless, this year I insisted that when our children went back for the term all of my public schools students, and teachers as well, be in possession of five washable cloth masks bearing our Coat of Arms, [so] that they could take pride in their stride.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report to your Honourable self and my colleagues in this honourable House that we did in fact proceed to purchase and have now distributed 44,000 masks to our students and teachers in the public primary and secondary schools, to help curtail the spread of COVID-19 as we move into the policy of having to live with COVID and with the full cognizance that COVID is going nowhere anytime soon.

Our students have been extremely responsible with the mask-wearing and other protective measures. Indeed, we should be very, very proud of our students, and the steps that they have taken to protect themselves and their peers.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of this honourable House to a few more of the Ministry's 2021 achievements.

Free school meals

Mr. Speaker, at the initiation and return of our students—I refer to [this] as the August Speech for educators—I had the privilege to announce that the PACT-Government had made provisions for free school meals for students in our primary schools and the Lighthouse School, commencing at the 2021-2022 academic year, for Broad Outcome Number One: Improving education to promote lifelong learning and greater economic mobility to enable them to better prepare; to focus on learning.

Mr. Speaker, one may wonder why the Lighthouse School? If we were only doing primary schools for this year because of fiscal reasons, we have to do it in two stages. The reason being, Mr. Speaker, the Lighthouse School is a K through 12 school, and it was going to be difficult to just give the K through 6, and leave the High School within that special needs school without the meals. So the PACT Government took the decision to provide the finances to include all of the Lighthouse School.

We will see that in this upcoming budget, provision is being made to provide meals—and that is breakfast, snack and lunch—to our three secondary public schools here in Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to continue this programme. Some may see it as socialisation, but Mr. Speaker, if we do not social-engineer when it comes to education...there is no greater justification in any other aspect of our economic pie. Investing in our children is a sure investment in our future and so—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: That is, indeed, a priority of the Government.

Mr. Speaker, we know that children experiencing hunger are far more likely to have memory and concentration problems because they do not have the energy to carry out the necessary academic or physical functions. Not getting enough nutrients through food and vitamins can tamper with sleeping patterns, making a child too tired to get the most out of a full day of school.

The brain develops rapidly at a young age, Mr. Speaker, and without the right nutrients it cannot develop properly, resulting in long-term effects on learning abilities. Hunger can also have psychological effects, Mr. Speaker, and may cause depression, anxiety and withdrawal, all of which are obstructions to a child trying to focus on their education.

Hunger can [also] cause behavioural problems. In a classroom setting, a single child's behaviour can affect the rest of the students, the teacher's attention, and the overall learning atmosphere. In this case, hunger not only disturbs the affected child's learning, but the learning of others as well. The provision of school meals is therefore, in my respectful submission,

an essential starting point for students to be successful in our schools.

New Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice

The new Cayman Islands Code of Practice for identification, assessment and provision of additional learning support needs in education (referred to as the Code of Practice) was finalised in May of this year.

The Code of Practice outlines a straightforward approach to meeting all additional learning support needs, including special education needs and disabilities and places the rights of children with additional learning support needs (including special educational needs and disabilities) at the centre of the process, allowing them to be heard and participate in decisions regarding their education.

Office of Education Standards Reports (OES)

Mr. Speaker, eleven government schools received "Satisfactory" rating in the Office of Educational Services inspections conducted in 2021, and another 3 government schools received a "Good" rating.

Schools that received "good" ratings included the Lighthouse School—which received a Good rating not for the first, but second time; and both John Gray and Layman E. Scott Senior High Schools [which] received "Good" ratings for the first time. The Ministry took time to go out to each of these schools and celebrate with them, to show how much we appreciated them and encourage them to move towards excellence.

Mr. Speaker, the OES attributed the Lighthouse School sustaining a "Good" rating to several factors including, but not limited to, excellent standards of behaviour. You have to understand [that] this is the Lighthouse School, where we cater to the educational needs and aspiration of our special needs students and yet, they were able to get excellent standards in behaviour.

Positive attitudes to learning among students—there were respectful, tolerant and supportive relationships between the adults and students; and students and their peers. There was a healthy, safe, secure, and nurturing learning environment at the Lighthouse School, where the care and welfare of the students was seen to be a priority for all. There was outstanding child protection and safeguarding arrangements.

Improved students' progress was a common factor, Mr. Speaker, in both the John Gray and Layman Scott inspection reports.

Highlighted in the John Gray High School inspection report, were excellent leadership and exceptional student leadership. Mr. Speaker, despite what we

see from time to time in social media—that is the exception, as opposed to the rule. I am extremely proud, and an avid supporter of the Principal, Mr. John Clarke. He has put his heart and soul into the development of the holistic student body there.

Separate and apart from the educational allocation through the Ministry's TP, [John Gray has] a vibrant group, the Boyz 2 Men Programme, which I support and will continue to support because I have seen the many, many, positive benefits derived from it; those are the types of programmes that fall right into the PACT-Government's "community building our country" objectives and goals.

The report further highlighted its promotion of civic and environmental understanding, which helps students understand and take pride in the features of Caymanian life.

The improved quality of learning and the quality of support and guidance provided to our students on the campuses where some of the factors highlighted in the Layman Scott High School inspection report.

CSEC Regional Merit Scholars

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: It gives me great pride to report, Mr. Speaker, that fourteen students from Clifton Hunter High School, which has its virtual graduation tonight, and two from John Gray High School were awarded top—not Caymanian, but **Top Regional**, Top Performers in the 2020 CSEC Examinations. Mr. Speaker that is a great achievement that should not surpass our attention.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thirteen, Mr. Speaker—thirteen—of those students were recognised for their performance in electronic data preparation and management; two were recognised for their performance in office administration, and one student was recognised for outstanding performance in Physics. Where we are in the junction of nation development with COVID-19 here, it shows that we have students who can match anyone in the region in the scientific area of Physics.

We are greatly dependent on financial services during COVID and we see that we are out-performing many in the region in our office administration. We are moving on to the electronic global platform, and we have students outperforming many in the region in electronic data preparation and management.

I said it before, Mr. Speaker, and I put it on record again: give a Caymanian an opportunity, and there is no one else in the world that can outrun, outstrip or outperform them; and that is what we are about—providing opportunities and equal access to high class, world-class education which we hope will ultimately continue to contribute to our world-class civil service.

[Desk thumping]

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, Early Childhood Care and Education or ECCE.

Since the start of this year, the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit has provided significant strategic support for early childhood care and education centres through leadership training and joint learning walks. The Unit also provided support through the Connect and Care Initiative, which allows the ECCE Unit to conduct more careful examinations when ensuring that our early childhood practitioners have a clearer understanding of what quality interactions and child-initiated play look like in the early years.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, what this breaks down and relates to is we found that in the early childhood centres it was mostly a play-related programme and, because we want our children to be on the cutting edge of education, we decided to move towards a hybrid curriculum, whereby some of it would be academically-based and some would be play-related, so that they would be exposed at a very early age to the realities of expectations once they embarked upon Nursery and Kindergarten in our public schools.

There was increased collaboration with stakeholders including the Early Childhood Association, the Department of Educational Services (DES) and the Office of Educational Standards (OES); Life Cayman and the Early Intervention Unit. We hosted more than 30 training and support sessions with early years practitioners, owners and managers.

The implementation of the Teaching and Learning Café, which I am very proud of; the main aim of this programme was to strengthen—and indeed it did strengthen—the early years' provision from preschool to reception, through the modelling and sharing of best practices across the early years sector. "**Each one, teach one**", the implementation of a more rigorous approach to identifying and supporting early years children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) through a well-developed, systematic transition policy, to aid the transition from preschool to reception to year one.

We also had the provision of financial support for young parents of young children including those of SEN, through the Early Childhood Assistance Programme (ECAP). Almost 200 new ECAP applications were received and processed for the academic year 2021/2022 and in the Ministry, we were happy to be in a position to offer this necessary financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, when I first took up the responsibility in the Ministry and was briefed with what obtained with the ECAP, the first thing that caught my attention was that there was a cut-off date for the ECAP applications. I found that there were persons missing that deadline for a myriad of reasons, and therefore their children were deprived of funding that was available

from the last government and continued by this government, so I issued a policy direction to open the application date and remove the deadline.

What that basically means, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a rolling application process from January to December and our Caymanian parents can apply; especially single parents that so badly need assistance with day-care and Early Childhood Education, which frees them up and enables them to go out and work and make a livelihood for themselves.

The increased intervention has resulted in steady improvement in the quality of provision in the early years, with all early years centres having received “satisfactory” or “better” ratings in a new cycle of the Office of Education Standards inspection—and this is an independent inspection, Mr. Speaker. Previously, it was under the Ministry of Education.

We saw that if we were going to improve education, it was important to have an independent inspection. That has happened, and I am very pleased with the progress and the reports that we are getting, because if we do not know what is wrong in our system, we have absolutely no direct, specific, or scientific methodologies to improve it, and improve is our *modus operandi*.

Assistant Teachers

Mr. Speaker, another important and exciting announcement that I am happy to share, which [both] the Honourable Premier and the Minister of Finance alluded to in their presentations, is that of assistant teachers.

Having been a teacher myself, Mr. Speaker, I know what it is to be in a classroom with no assistant teachers. Some classes range in size from 15 all the way to 28 [with] children’s attention span being varied and diverse. Because we are public schools (education is mandatory, so we do not refuse any) we get all sorts of academic levels, so it is not unusual to see that in a particular school there is some 22 per cent of the total student population that are SEN students or require extra attention.

Seeing that in some of our schools, I made the presentation to the PACT Government and they have given their full support whereby this upcoming budgetary year we will seek to [provide] assistant teachers. [During] the last government we were able to do up to year 3, now we will move to put them in years 4, 5 and 6, so the entire primary school system will have a minimum of one assistant teacher helping the main teacher.

This will allow the teacher to concentrate more on the teaching and academics of the school, rather than being involved in the school’s behavioural aspects, Mr. Speaker. The extra teacher in the classroom will also [provide] gifted students in the class with [additional] time, so that we can cater more individualism

to the student population; then our educational curriculum can truly become more student-centred focused.

I also felt it was necessary, Mr. Speaker, since we no longer have the middle school [for] our year 6 children to be able to have a smoother transition going into high school, that as the monies become available we would seek to add assistant teachers for years 9, 10 and 11—which are still very formative educational years for students—so that they can transition better into high school; have time for proper counselling to make better career choices, and be better prepared to do their examination choices as well.

Mr. Speaker, currently there are approximately 150 assistant teachers employed by the Ministry of Education, and we are seeking to add another 127 of these critical educators into our public schools’ classrooms. As I said, the new assistant teachers will be able to support more of our classroom teachers through tasks such as:

- Preparing classroom activities;
- Facilitating instruction in smaller working groups;
- Managing students’ behaviour; and also,
- Helping to evaluate, which is a very critical part of the education/learning journey of our students’ work.

As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, our classroom teachers will have more time and I want to re-emphasise this: *the classroom teacher will have more time to deal with the primary task of teaching, which is to get our children to learn.*

Condolences on the Passing of Mr. Paul Robinson (Cayman Islands Public Library Service)

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to turn to the Cayman Islands Public Library Service.

It brings me great sadness to share with this honourable House, the passing of the Director of Public Libraries in the person of Mr. Paul Robinson, who passed suddenly last month.

Mr. Robinson’s sudden death has been difficult for the entire Ministry and our library teams. You see, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Robinson was a very dedicated civil servant and contributed much to our public libraries. He had a great passion for his work. He worked closely with our schools and helped to host many community events, especially on Saturdays. Indeed, he will be greatly missed and we extend our heartfelt condolences to his entire family.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to share some of the good work of Mr. Robinson and the library team. Throughout 2021, the Public Library Service has continued to provide programmes and services to facilitate the education and personal enrichment of members of the Cayman Islands community. Some of the main programmes include:

- Basic computer training;
- A one-day introduction to computers courses for beginners and senior citizens who have learned the history of computers;
- Basic keyboarding;
- Microsoft Word;
- How to access the internet; and
- E-mail.

You may wonder, Mr. Speaker, why the library is getting involved in basic computer training; it is because we never stop learning, and so in the library we have e-books as well as traditional books. Mr. Paul came up with the policy guidance for us, which we gladly funded, and he began offering these basic computer lessons in the libraries so that not just young people but seniors also, could get familiarised with computers and be able to access the world of e-books right there, at the George Town Library and the other libraries [as well].

He also introduced the programme called the Battle of the Books, the Summer Reading Challenge Programme, and the Story Board competition. The public library was also able to successfully undertake the following projects, Mr. Speaker:

- The installation of the stage of presentations and performing arts for the George Town Historic Library with funding from the Friends of Cayman Library Foundation;
- Recruitment of a part-time library assistant; and
- The initiation of a new contract with a security guard to provide guard services for the George Town and West Bay libraries.

We found that some parents were attempting to use the George Town Library, in particular, as a baby-sitting facility; they would pick up [the children] from school, drop them off at the library and disappear until 5:30/6 o'clock, and although we would like to see as many young ones come in as possible, that is not one of our functionalities.

New John Gray High School

Mr. Speaker, the main team continues to progress the construction of the new John Gray High School—and I know: I am one of those Ministers who gets quite excited about projects. I do not just like programmes, I like to get into the mortar and be able to have a holistic approach to development of education in this jurisdiction.

To see that process of the new John Gray High School evolving... When I was first given the responsibility to be the Minister of Education four years ago, there was a remnant; it had been started and not completed. The last Government gave funding so that we

could progress to where it is and the PACT Government is here now as the Government of choice, and they too have continued the funding for the school.

God's willing, nature cooperating and COVID dissipating, we hope to be able to commence the opening of this school come September of next year. The project team—that is McAlpine [Ltd. Cayman], who is the main contractor of the new John Gray High School—continues to progress very well.

The main school being Project A, we have been able to safely open some of the building's [areas] for our students and staff, and so there are some lessons going on now at the school. These include:

- The main entrance;
- The administration offices;
- The healthcare centre;
- The kitchen;
- The dining area;
- A counselling area; and
- A nurturing area.

And no, I am not talking about a hotel, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about a school because we believe in developing the holistic child.

Students and staff also have access to technological workshop areas—that is with our TVET Programme and the technical class areas and Home Economic classes. A new performing arts centre complete, Mr. Speaker, with a dance and drama studio, a music room and a steel-pan room, because we are Caribbean people after all. We have a temperature controlled storage room for steel-pans—

[Laughter]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly:—And a double-purpose performance theatre assembly hall with retractable seating.

In the upcoming budget, there are plans to continue the design and the construction of the Theoline McCoy Primary School hall in Bodden Town, which is badly needed and has for a number of years been pushed by my friend and now Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for Bodden Town East; and the Joanna Clarke Primary School hall [which] is also in need of expansion. We have the Committee's financial support to move on with these two badly-needed projects within this four year tenure.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be more than proud, not in a smug or arrogant way, to be able to invite all colleagues both from this side and across this honourable Floor, to tour the new John Gray facility early in the first quarter (Q1) of next year to be able to explain and show them.

When the naysayers come and talk about how much we are spending, the same ones, Mr. Speaker, almost concurrently ask, *who are we developing for?* That John Gray High School will be a standing—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: And a lasting testament of who we are developing for. The children of our country and in my responsibility, the main one, the public school.

I was happy when I heard my lady friend from across the way, the shadow Minister for Education, refer to the transfer of her beloved grandchild from private school to public school. A wise decision Member for George Town South, because while we are on the watch working collaboratively, it has been seen from the various contributions on this side and across the Floor, [that] education remains a paramount consideration for this country's development.

Mr. Speaker, it has to be one where there is a conspicuous absence of politics, Mr. Speaker, and I am eternally grateful for the contributions on both sides of the House, saying that the support is there for education.

God give me strength and health, I will certainly continue to live up to the expectations of the Honourable Premier, and all Honourable Members of this House, to ensure that our children have an equal or better opportunity to hold their heads up; to have high academic performance so that they can come and take their rightful place not at the Grade D's and E's of the scale, but in middle and top management and they, too, can sit in the judiciary arena; they too can sit, not just in Parliament, but in the financial offices making those six-figure numbers.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Who are we developing for, Mr. Speaker? We are developing for these children that I call *my* children, but indeed I know, each person can say that personally and really mean it.

Mr. Speaker, there are also plans to:

- Expand the Lighthouse School;
- Design new classrooms for Red Bay Primary;
- Build a new building for the Layman Scott High School in Cayman Brac; and
- The need for the addition of a nursery was identified by my friend and colleague, the Member for East End.

We did a pilot programme for the Creek Primary School; at this juncture, time will not allow me to expound upon the number of reasons why it was necessary, but Mr. Speaker, it was one of the best decisions I have made in Education. Not only has it taken the three-year-olds out from being at home just with a nanny or regular helper, but it provides a level playing field for those children in a world-class classroom.

In the last government, Mr. Speaker, we did not have the money or the time to build extra classrooms so we had to think outside of the box and so what we

did, was that we saw that the Spot Bay student population was declining, so I transferred Year 2 from Creek Primary School to Spot Bay School and took all the other classes and slipped them up. I was able to utilise the former Kindergarten classroom for a nursery classroom with minimal improvements.

Additionally, it came just as we were rolling out the 1-to-1 computers, so we were able to get age-appropriate laptops for students; and it has worked well. It was a growing and learning experience, and those children are excited. Where the school would normally get out at 2:30/3pm, of course they were age 3; we had to put in an extra curriculum programme so they could remain there until 5:30 to allow the parents to go to work and not have to find extra learning.

As moneys become available, I am excited to do the very same thing for all of our public schools here in Cayman. I know it is going to be a little more difficult to navigate Mr. Speaker because, whereas in the Brac we really did not have private day-cares, there are several here, and there will be the criticism that *you are trying to take away business* but no, Mr. Speaker, I see it much differently.

With the introduction and the addition of the nurseries for age 3 only—there will still be a market for one-day-old up to age 3—what it will do, is put our Caymanian children on an equal playing field at that age when they are ready to learn and we have proven that at the Creek School—they are ready to learn, their little minds are like sponges. When they go to our Kindergarten they will all know their ABC's and how to count, which is not what is happening now, Mr. Speaker.

Those who have funding; those who have access to it, will find that their children will come up and then it is difficult for the children to catch up, as they progress through the various levels. That is not what the past Government or this Government are about. We want to ensure that our Caymanians are educated.

If we cannot do anything else for our children, let us make quality time and the requisite investment, because it does not pay us any dividends, it does not bode well, to only question Caymanian rights at the time of the disbursement of a work permit. It has to start in the classroom, and the earlier it starts, the better we will fare as we nation-build this country.

[Desk thumping]

Layman Scott High School (Cayman Brac)

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, as I stated, there are also plans to build the Layman Scott High School.

I indicated to the last Government, and indeed to this one, that I did not expect to get much infrastructure for Education in Cayman Brac in the last four years, not because the Government would not support it, but because we had to build and fill a bigger need in

Cayman, and that was the need to house 1,200 students from out of the dilapidated, ageing building, into the new John Gray High School.

For the most part, my efforts and the funding that we got in the last government were put into that and as I indicated, I am equally excited and proud to be able to fully open that facility next year; but likewise, this being (God's willing) my last four years and opportunity to perform as Minister of Education, it is Cayman Brac's time as well.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Although we have a school which continues to elicit excellent remarks from those in education about its marks and grades, it was built during a time when we did not have the financial capability to build a purpose-built school like we are building now.

The line of sight is deplorable, Mr. Speaker. It gives rise for drugs, for persons who should not be on the campus; it gives rise to poor behaviour and is not conducive to the community-building concept that we have. So we were able to purchase 59 acres to the South and East of the current Cayman Brac Sports Complex and no, not all that is for the school, but because we have a vision quite a bit will be for educational purposes.

Property is moving quickly and slipping from the hands of Caymanians because of affordability, so the Government has embarked upon the acquisition of properties throughout all of the constituencies that can be used for government purposes in the years to come; that is why, when we got that size property for the price that we got it, we bought it. We started for many years ago.

I started to develop; my colleague for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman continued, and now I am back to continue the development of the Cayman Brac Sports Complex. Unlike Grand Cayman, where we are building the school and we have to get funds to build the sports complex, we built the sports complex and now we are building the school, but we will end up in the same place: with a first-class educational institutions for the Cayman Islands.

As the Premier has said more than once, we are not just one Cayman Islands, its three. He has proven that in fact, in that except for Newlands, he probably spends more time in Little Cayman than both Moses and I, Mr. Speaker. It shows that his commitment and that of his Government's to the Sister Islands, because it takes a government with a vision to go and buy a property that size in a time like this.

We also know, and you know this Mr. Speaker, being a former Leader [of Government Business, that] when we wait until we need all of a property to buy it, we spend much more money; and we can see that with the George Town Fish Market. The fishermen have traditionally used it; they want it and need it, but it

is in the hands of a private proprietor and to get it, the Government would have to go through land acquisition and that is not really the policy of this or any government that I have been a part of.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to land, if this House gives me the money, I would buy every piece in Grand Cayman I could find because who are we developing for—for our Caymanians to stay here. And what makes them stay here more? Having that little piece of this rock that everybody else around the world wants and it seems like we are not getting it.

At the appropriate time, this Government will come to this House and lay out the many pieces of property—and let me say one more thing, Mr. Speaker: That piece of property that we were able to acquire...I will not call the name, but the one who now seems to own just as much land as Government was bidding on that same piece of land in Cayman Brac and offered, as far as I remember, \$200,000 more than what we offered; but through the art of negotiation, and the proprietors being persons who have an interest in Cayman, and the Government being willing to put up the money, we outbid that large developer who is acquiring land in all three Islands with a lower price. That is an oxymoron, but we did because we now own it; that is now Crown property.

I pray to God that no future Government sees the need to dispose of it. It is for prosperity of the people of the Cayman Islands and, in particular, for educational purposes.

[Desk thumping]

Good Governance Model Report

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, from some months now I tasked the Ministry team to look at the whole concept of the good governance model to ascertain the pros and cons of it to see what is working and submit a report to me showing the value that we can derive from it; not just value for money, but for educational and socialisation purposes as well, and it would be in the best interest of our teachers and our country, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to receiving that report [and the] submissions thereon, from the working Committee within the senior management team early in Q1, based on the hard work with the good governance model of the former Chairman Mr. Dan Scott, his council and the sub-committee, to see how we can actually bring it in, whether it is in stages or wholesale. To ensure that whenever the modus operandi is brought in, it is good for all the children across all of the constituencies, and that we have principals in place who had the opportunity to be trained to take on this new accountability. Mr. Speaker, during my term or any term, I do not want it to return where to get a scholarship depended on where you came from, who you were for, how much money you had or where you went; and that is not being

racist, that is just repeating history. *How do I know?* I was a product of it, Mr. Speaker.

School Policy on bullying

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, the work that we are carrying out with the school policy on bullying as it relates to putting it in legislation and making it mandatory from a statutory perspective, has been somewhat slowed down because of COVID-19.

We realise that there is an element of that in our schools; we are not happy to report that, but Mr. Speaker, we have to put it in perspective. The children do not get off the bus or their [parents'] vehicles in the morning, press a button and say, *I am going to be a bully today.*

There are 24 hours in the day, we have them for approximately eight hours, that is 33.33 of the time—that is one of those recurring decimals; so they are, or should be, with their parents for two thirds (2/3) of the day. So the parents themselves, Mr. Speaker, have the first responsibility of teaching their children and being a parent to their children, and that Mr. Speaker—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: —does not include going to John Gray; going to Clifton Hunter; going to the Cayman Brac High School or my primary schools and cursing out my teachers and threatening to beat the teachers or the other students. Bullying comes in different forms. Children often learn from their environment. And, if my teachers are not performing, the Honourable Deputy Governor has made it absolutely clear in all of his forums, that he is moving towards a world-class civil service and will not tolerate that type of performance in the classroom; but Mr. Speaker, teachers have to be appreciated.

In the last Government, as well as in the PACT Government we have, and continue to ensure, that our teachers feel appreciated. There is one little piece left and I have repeated it in several forums, which is the domino effect of the remuneration for those who did not get an alignment or increase when we moved it up to \$5,000. That is still a work in progress and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that before I make my exit, hopefully in 3.5 years' time, that work would have been completed because teachers work hard. If you thought they did not, when we were forced to lock down on the 20th March last year because of COVID parents were begging me, Mr. Speaker, to open back the schools so that their own children could go back; so it is a two-way street. My teachers have to perform and they are performing, but they are not God; they do not have eyes everywhere.

There must be a system and there is a system in place, that when/if bullying occurs, there is zero tolerance for bullying and it must be attacked and nipped in the bud as early as possible. Otherwise, we are going to get them falling through the social levels of society,

ending up in Northward, breaking into my home and your home and then we wonder why Northward has so many children there.

Parents—single mother or single father—take time for your children. If you can catch a plane to Miami and jump up in Jamaica or Trinidad Carnivals, jump up with your children in a good way with their school books and do their homework. Attend their PTAs. Now you have no excuse; they have internet connectivity, they have their laptops, they have teachers who are paid and happy. They are getting a brand new high school which is even better than any high school I saw in the United Kingdom—and I know I will get accused again that I built a Hilton—but this one that I am building is not even a Hilton, Mr. Speaker. It is a Four Seasons and I am happy that I had the Governments—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: —to do it.

We have to make our children know that it is not just talk at election time, that they are our children and they are our best assets. We have that awesome responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to leave this educational campground better than we found it.

We were fortunate enough to be able to get an education, to be able to avail ourselves of the numerous opportunities that the Cayman dream world has. There still is a Cayman dream, but do not leave our children as dreamers without that accessibility, and that proof, that they have dreamed big and received the benefits when we are gone.

We are known from way back in that little red history book that that Commissioner wrote; when he had to go and break up the dance in George Town and bring in the colours he made a little statement that has always remained with me, that Caymanians could be deceiving a lot of times. He said, *"You are a Politician?"* "Yes", I said, and let me tell you why I say that, Mr. Speaker: Because we will roll out the red carpet when they come off the plane, and play the bands and fly the flags at the airport, and we will come into George Town and drive right past and not pick up a poor little Caymanian on the street.

This Government made it their priority to say, "Community builds Country," and to do that is in the plural. It means "all and sundry", no child left behind; and that is what we are determined to do, Mr. Speaker. As we move on this educational journey, we will—shall—have no choice, but to educate our children.

Ministry of District Administration

Mr. Speaker, let me move on now to the Ministry of District Administration. There will be more to say about Education as I navigate through Finance Committee and questions are fielded, so I will utilise that time for the balance of education.

Mr. Speaker, the formation of this new Ministry brings a new opportunity to focus on specific related Broad Outcomes of our Government on which we have agreed. In particular, we can focus on providing solutions to improve the well-being of our people so that they can achieve their full potential.

We will strengthen good governance for a more effective government; we will support climate change, resilience and sustainable development; we will build a modern infrastructure to ensure a successful future for all three Cayman Islands through strategies, actions of support, sustainability and innovation in order to make the lives of those we serve much better, while caring for our most vulnerable. Therefore Mr. Speaker, I am proud to serve as Minister responsible for a range of subject areas including:

- My homeland, District Administration;
- The new Lands and Survey Ministry;
- The Public Lands Commission;
- Sister Islands Sports Unit;
- The Water Authority; and
- The Sister Islands' Affordable Housing Development Corporation.

However, before I speak about each particular Department, Unit or SAGC, I want to note that the Ministry of District Administration and Lands has, and will continue to provide, efficient and effective advice, services, and information to both internal and external stakeholders, through modernisation and improving current practices.

The Ministry, and the PACT-Government I am proud to serve as a part of, are creating new and exciting policies and programmes despite the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's earlier comments.

I refer to that, Mr. Speaker, because I have great respect for the Honourable Leader of the Opposition—we worked on Cayman Airways, and I found him to be an officer and a gentleman—but because much emphasis was on this Government continuing what that Government was doing, I want to say that I am happy that is so, otherwise I would not be a part of it. I am not here to destroy. I said it was better to come and build the boat, than destroy the engine room because I was not Captain and that is why I am here, Mr. Speaker. That is why I am still here.

If this new Government just did what the former Government—which I was a part of—did there would have been no need for election, they would have re-elected all of us so it is reasonable to expect that this Government would want to do some new things; therefore my plea, in the spirit of camaraderie, is to allow them to prove themselves and produce their programmes and projects while still carrying out many of the programmes and projects that we did when we were the other part.

I know it is politics, I know it is the Westminster style of government. I know this is a House of politics and it is adversarial and I can only speak for me, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I look across there, I

do not see “PPM”. I see friends, I see Caymanians, you know?

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I would make another confession, Mr. Speaker, which was not in my notes, but I speak as the Lord leads me.

It hurt me to the core when I heard my friend, my former Parliamentary Secretary (PS) speak, because I could hear he was hurting; and it was out of character for him to speak and say some of those things but he is an honest man, so he spoke what was on his heart, and I thought last night, Mr. Speaker: *Lord, help me to be a conduit of your peace. Help me to be a hand extended. Help me be a voice that brings calming nature to this House. That is all I ask Lord, because at the end of the day, we all want what is good for Cayman.* We are in different wagons, me being a country girl, probably riding a donkey with a cartwheel while others are probably in a limousine, but I believe that if we stick together, especially during COVID...

Yes, we may have different ideas, but let us be friends. When I first entered this Chamber, I was fortunate enough that I had the opportunity to see persons like Messrs. Haig Bodden and Benson [Ebanks]. Haig would get up there and speak three, four, five hours [and] beat Benson half to death, but if it was a Wednesday, they got together in the same car, went to Rotary, had their association and came back—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: —or Thursday, whatever day it was—thanks, you have been here longer than me.

All I am saying is that the election came [and] it was painful. It was a long week for all of us. The results might not be what everybody expected, but thank God we are here. That means that your constituency and my constituents thought that we were the best person, man and woman, for the job. Let us keep up that expectation and you know what, come the next election, you do not have to rush then and go and campaign, because what they saw and what they heard, they will continue to put good persons in. And then you are going to want to say, *Well Ms. Juliana, how will we ever get [to] Government?* Well, this is one seat [that] is going to be vacant. Work hard—fill it; but whatever you do, make sure that we do not let politics destroy our relationships, because most of us—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: —including myself—most of us, have nowhere else to go. Yes, we have a British passport, but if we wanted to go we would have gone there long time [ago]. We are here to stay. As Ruth of old said, *“Where thou goest, I will go;*

where thou stayest, I will stay; and where you are buried, I will be buried." Well, I will be buried [in] Cayman Brac, but you know what I mean.

We still have Finance Committee to go; as we go through this process, our people would much rather have us come out sharing with them than in here being adversarial. We might not be able to go in their pot now because of COVID, but there are so many people hurting; so many deaths this year.

The budget will pass anyway, because we have the numbers and even when I was Opposition, most Oppositions still vote for the budget. We may abstain, or walk out, but for the most part we support it. Let us enter this Christmas season letting our people know [that] there is a change.

There is a proper place for the Opposition. I would not want to be a part of a Government without an Opposition, because then Governments get autocratic and power corrupts, so there is a proper place for the Opposition. The Government also has to listen to the Opposition because, even though perhaps this Government covers pretty much all the constituencies, not every Minister is represented here. When you break it down you still have Cayman Brac West, the Leader of Government Business [*sic*], my friend David and my friends from George Town South and Red Bay; but their people are still our people, so let us continue to have an open door.

Do what we are prepared to do, get up and argue the issues, ask for what you need, but Lord help us this day to make this commitment, that we will not say "no" just because it is not coming from here, or say "yes" because it is coming from here. Let the answer come from here, and it will always be the right one, Mr. Speaker.

I do not know where that came from, it was not my speech, but it is free. Take it for what it is worth, Mr. Speaker, with great respect.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry staff with signing authority now has the capability to review documents and sign electronically. While this may seem like a simple change, it is significant as it has reduced the paper usage within our Ministry in keeping with sustainability, one of our objectives.

In addition, we have shifted the single majority of our vendors to online electronic funds transfer payments. Again, Mr. Speaker, this means less paper used within the Ministry and [less] printing of physical checks. While this is a sustainability initiative, Mr. Speaker, it also enhances our teams' productivity and efficiency through modernised processes and procedures.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to announce in this honourable House our Ministry's plan, with the support of my Government colleagues, in particular my

learned and capable Parliamentary Secretary from West Bay West Central, Mrs. Kathy, to launch new and exciting programmes which will seek to address some of the major concerns raised by Caymanians across all three Islands.

Affordable Residential Land Lot Programme

Mr. Speaker, we will be rolling out an Affordable Residential Land Lot Programme. Let me say that again, because it is new: We will be rolling out an Affordable Residential Land Lot Programme. *What is that, Mr. Speaker?* It is an affordable residential programme [that] will not take away from my colleague, the honourable Member for North Side's ambitious plans, in his pursuit of building 100 affordable homes per year. Instead, the programme will focus on Caymanians who wish to own their very own parcel of land to construct their own house; as such, it is not connected to the affordable homes programme.

Mr. Speaker, this programme is anticipated to fill the gap we all see today, where we have Caymanians that do not qualify for affordable home programmes due to their income being either too high for the programme, or not high enough to purchase a home in today's market. Similarly, we have Caymanians who [would] wish to have input on the design and build of their own home, if they could only afford a piece of land.

The Government will therefore acquire and utilise some of the existing Crown property in each district of the three Islands and create residential land lot subdivisions—which will include the necessary utilities and road infrastructure—to allow Caymanians the ability to purchase residential land at an affordable price. The lots will be available for sale at cost, Mr. Speaker, with certain restrictions and conditions to facilitate Caymanian land ownership. We anticipate that this programme will allow Caymanians to own an affordable piece of the Cayman Islands, in order to construct a future family home and create communities which build our country.

Mr. Speaker, we will be providing more information in early 2022 as we launch this programme, but at this time I can say that the pilot will be launched in the beautiful district of East End. We have purchased the property, and anticipate having over 40 house lots available for sale to Caymanians, with preference given to the residents of the district of East End. This programme has been fully supported by my friend and colleague, the honourable Member and Parliamentary Secretary for East End, Mr. Isaac Rankine.

Mr. Speaker, I can say at this time that the plans for this subdivision have been drawn and are currently being reviewed and revised, but as we stand, it will have lots for sale on which the Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development—because we work together as a PACT group—can build much needed housing for indigents; lots for affordable

homes; a lot for commercial use—that is a small retail or grocery store; a lot for community and homework centre, [and] a lot for parking, because this community will be immediately across the road from a brand new public beach land we recently acquired, which will be opening in the coming months.

Community builds country, Mr. Speaker, and we are affording the middle income Caymanian an opportunity to form a well-planned out, urban community.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, as I said we will be launching the programme early in 2022, and I will be happy to provide for the details at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the preceding dovetails into another new programme this Ministry is working on. As noted, there will be a new public beach across the road from the new affordable house lots subdivision in East End, and the Ministry has plans for the expansion and creation of new full service public beaches across the Islands and the districts. In fact, in Stake Bay Road, just below the high school, we just purchased a number of acres from the road to the beach to do a similar public beach facility because they did not have any in that vicinity—almost across from Skull Cave in Stake Bay.

This means, Mr. Speaker, the public beaches that have amenities—and while I am there, I am trying desperately to get the property that we know as “Hell” in West Bay. There is at least one proprietor that is not agreeing on the price, so if anyone in West Bay has any influence with the owners, please put in a say, because I would very much like to purchase that remnant land for the people of the Cayman Islands and the Government will certainly support that, as indications have already been made in our land vote if we can get it.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to see a continuation of our public beaches having appropriately maintained restrooms, recreational facilities, camping grounds, and free internet, so that our young people have things to do. I heard my friend from George Town South say that her and her colleague from George Town West provided internet there with the assistance of C3. That is something we want to roll out across all of the constituencies so that our young people, and even our mature citizens, can go and congregate.

A joke passed around a bit earlier, that if you wanted to use your bathroom at home and could not get to use one, turn off the internet and one would become immediately available. That is just is a joke to show the importance and the necessity of the internet for our people in Cayman, where they want to keep up with the news; they want to keep up with their friends on social media.

As a government, I think it is that instantaneous gravitation towards information that we need to assist and provide. That is what the Ministry hopes to roll out over the next 3.5 years and as such, in consultation

with the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resilience, the Department of Environment (DoE) and the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, we plan to significantly expand public beach facilities across all three Islands for the benefit of Caymanians, residents and visitors alike.

We saw during COVID that we got “lockdown fever” and people were begging—Caymanians that never went to the beach before were begging for that outside leisure time—so we are moving to provide that and ensure that they are well-kept as we move along with our Beautification Committee led by the Member for Savannah, which has representatives from each of the districts, with sub-committees to make sure that we keep these Cayman Islands beautiful.

That is what attracts people here, but more importantly for me is what will keep our young people here, so they will not board British Airways moving to England, Canada or the US. We want our young people here. We are not educating them to have a brain drain to another jurisdiction. In Cayman Brac, we know what that is, and we do not want to see that happen in Cayman, so let us develop our communities so that we can create the great country that we all want to see.

Exercise Park on Seven Mile Beach

For example, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday we will be breaking ground on a new exercise park at the Seven Mile Beach [which] we hope to open in the first quarter of 2022. Created through a Public/Private Partnership, it will be the first of its kind in the entire Caribbean [and] will enhance the health and wellbeing of all who utilise it. Again, Mr. Speaker, this shows the collaborative nature of the PACT-Government and the vision for a healthier society. It also draws on the desire of the Ministry responsible for Sports’ and, indeed, the Government’s Broad Outcome No. 7 - Utilising sports to enhance the lives of our people.

New public beaches

Mr. Speaker, not to belabour the point, but just to note [that] we also have plans for new public beaches in Bodden Town, East End, North Side—I mentioned Cayman Brac—Spotts Beach and, Member for George Town South, do not feel no way but I do not have the courage to go without you to the South Sound beach.

New Bodden Town Public Beach

In particular, we already purchased the property for the new Bodden Town public beach and we expect to begin work during the first quarter of 2022, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resilience; the Department of Environment, and the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure. The new beach will have a specific area

for camping, a sporting area, and a restroom area. There will be ample parking, vendor kiosks, cabanas, nature board walk, and a future swimming and recreational dock subject to permission from Department of Environment (DOE), of course.

Sister Islands Adult Training Facility

Mr. Speaker, another new programme that the Ministry is currently finalising is the establishment of the Sister Islands Adult Training Facility to provide engagement and services to persons with disabilities or who need special assistance. I believe it is important to ensure that we engage with those persons and provide [them] with the highest quality of life possible.

Grand Cayman has the Sunrise Adult Training Centre in West Bay, capably directed by the Honourable Minister responsible for Children and Family Services. By all accounts, [through] the services and programmes delivered their clients lead a more fulfilled, meaningful, and rewarding life. We envision the same for the Sister Islands, and therefore, with eager anticipation, I look forward to officially launching this programme in 2022.

Youth and Civic Centre on Creek Road

The building on the main Creek Road where the Labour Office, Department of Environment and my former MLA Office [are]—which was purchased by a previous government many years ago and designated as a Youth Centre—is being renovated for a new Youth and Civic Centre. The young people go on Friday nights; the *so and so club*, which is the older citizens, (many of them widows or widowers) goes on Monday evening. They do various crafts and cooking, which they sell at our agriculture show to get funds, et cetera. [At this] meeting place, they share good quality time with Ms. Annie-Rose and all.

[As] it is a bigger space, we are creating a reception and office so that it can be used for other functions. It is right next to the Creek Graveyard [and] sometimes there are funerals and no place [for the service]. The Eastern and Western districts can come and have their socials [there].

We can do technical vocational training there, until we get our high school built on the bluff; then the existing high school would be used to house the UCCI University College so that we can do technical vocational training there and the Public Works guys can get training. Because we do live in a hot, tropical area, I envision they would work in the morning until it gets hot, when the level of productivity goes down and there are diminishing returns, they can then go to school and get their mechanical, plumbing and electrical (MEP) training so that they can have optimism; hope that they can move up in their jobs, so that when they retire their pension will be more than \$200 to \$400 a month. They can

have a real expectancy to improve their lives and have upward mobility in the Public Works Department.

Brac Special Needs Programme

Mr. Speaker, there are about ten special needs adults on the Island and the time has come for us to bring them an opportunity to meet and mingle with their peers, get an education, do some arts and crafts, go on field trips; almost every time I go to Eats and Treats, Ms. Joy Tibbetts is there. There was a time when we had a summer function in Harmony Hill that provided such services for a few weeks during the year, [but] that no longer exists. The special needs vehicle that we have is aging, so we ordered another to facilitate pick up so they feel part of the society and in the mainstream. I am really excited and looking forward to launching that programme in early 2022.

Mr. Speaker, while there are many more initiatives I can speak to in my Ministry and underlying departments, before I speak more specifically about the Department's units I want to highlight the SAGCs under my respective Ministry.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, did I hear you correctly? In talking about the parks, did you mention Barkers?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, I did not mention Barkers as an example [in] what was given here but, being part of the PACT-Government, I am privy that there is active consideration for acquisition of additional property in the Barkers area and the West Bay contingent which is pretty much led by you—being the father of that contingent—never makes us forget the importance of it, and the Government will ensure that we keep you happy, sir.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: You're welcome, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman Brac and Little Cayman street-lighting programme

Mr. Speaker, as indicated, there are plans to resume the street lighting programme in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman to be able to light up for safety. The reason I am referring to that is because as Minister, I am under District Administration; the Honourable Minister responsible for Works deals with Grand Cayman street lighting each year through Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC). That is not within my ambit, so I am not leaving Grand Cayman out, but I am referring specifically to Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the street lighting, we will install much-needed drain wells in areas that are prone to flooding. Like in Grand Cayman, this will be a much-welcomed relief to the affected residents. This has been a programme that my colleague and I have been carrying out incrementally over 25 or 26 years because there are never sufficient funds to do all of it at one time; and indeed, even if we did have the money, with the climatic changes, we find that as the rains are more frequent and the hurricanes more ferocious, the need becomes even more evident as time goes on. So we are happy with the incremental approach.

Lands and Survey

Mr. Speaker, turning quickly now to Lands and Survey. I will speak briefly in regard to one of the key Departments, not only in the Ministry of District Administration and Lands, but in the entire Cayman Islands namely, the Department of Lands and Survey; and how their work directly contributes to our Government's Broad Outcomes No. 5 - **Supporting climate change, resilience and sustainable development** and No. 8 - **Building a modern infrastructure to ensure a successful future of our Islands**.

Mr. Speaker, the success stories of the Lands and Survey Department are many, and I am glad to share how our services have significantly contributed to the revenue of the Cayman Islands Government and the effective operation of our booming real estate market, as well as contributing to activities to address sustainability.

Stamp duty and registration fees

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Lands and Survey has significantly outperformed all metrics amidst increasing service demands. As of 31 October 2021, Lands and Survey has generated stamp duty and registration fees in excess of \$105 million.

Though we face COVID, and the world seems to be in turmoil, and there is so much uncertainty, we here in the Cayman Islands have so much to thank God for. We are truly a blessed nation. Can you even begin to imagine that in a time such as this, Lands and Survey was still able to get revenues to the tune of \$105 million? Which by the way, Mr. Speaker, is the highest ever recorded for Lands and Survey.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: This significant milestone has been one of the key contributors to the Cayman Islands revenues over the past year especially, as I said, during the COVID pandemic when other key revenue streams decreased.

Seeing such performance from Lands and Survey over this time, Mr. Speaker, I think we can well and

truly say that today, the third pillar of the Cayman Islands' economy behind Financial Services and Tourism, is indeed our real estate market, largely thanks to the ongoing work of the World Class Civil Service's hard working, dedicated team, at the Lands and Survey Department. Along with exceeding this revenue target, I am happy to confirm that the Department has also met and will exceed, its entity revenue targets with other fees as well.

Mr. Speaker, in order to continue to provide support to our valued team and customers, with the resulting escalated service offering and delivery to a rapidly growing customer base, our Government has supported the Department's initiative to modernise its policies and procedures. In fact, the Department of Lands and Survey continues to drive innovation to improve efficiency and provide customer self-service capabilities so that customers can now access information 24-hours a day, seven days per week, 365 days per year. Many of these exciting new initiatives will be coming online in a phased approach over the next 18 months.

LILA (Lands Interactive Live Assistant)

One initiative I am most excited about Mr. Speaker, is a new interactive chat box information service aptly named LILA (Lands Interactive Live Assistant), that went live in November, 2021.

Located on the Lands and Survey main web page www.caymanlandinfo.ky, the chat box is user friendly [and] allows users to ask questions and get immediate responses. Normally, as a government, we get [criticism] that the phone rings and no one answers, so that is a big improvement, sir. As the Deputy Governor and the Government ensure that there is a World Class Civil Service, this chat box will be an integral part of moving towards that status.

The chat box tool will guide users to the appropriate forms to be completed and provide information on how to complete them; so it is user-friendly. It will be the easiest way to find answers to the most common land registration and stamp duty queries without having to speak to Lands and Survey staff members in person, or via the telephone. It is accessible at the customers' leisure and it is timely, as it will reduce face-to-face interaction especially during the current COVID-19 environment—so there are good things being derived from the COVID environment.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, the chat box I referred to as LILA will be intuitive going forward, and will learn from questions it is asked. The built-in learning will allow LILA to improve the efficiency and effectiveness over time, while also making recommendations to the Department on possible improvements. It really is exceptional, Mr. Speaker and I would highly recommend all Members of this honourable House to take an opportunity to ask LILA questions—do not ask about results for the next election, though.

[Laughter]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: It is important to note that LILA has initially been loaded with the most frequently asked questions which usually relate to land registration section or stamp duty; however, over the upcoming months, more information will be loaded onto LILA such as surveying information.

Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the Department of Lands and Survey, the Ministry has an ambitious plan to amend a host of land-and-survey-related legislation including, but not limited to, the modernisation of:

- The Land Surveyors Act and Regulations;
- The Registered Land Act;
- The Registered Land Act and Prescription Act;
- Protection of our Right of ways—which we know has been contentious for many decades;
- The Strata Titles and Registration Act and Regulations;
- The Roads Naming and Numbering Act and Regulations;
- The Land Acquisition Act; and
- Various amendments and new legislation to facilitate e-conveyancing.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see from the above, it is indeed an ambitious legislative plan, but I have the utmost confidence in my Ministry and team of Lands and Survey to drive these legislative changes; in fact, in the last Cabinet we asked for drafting instructions to be done for a number of these, so the process has already commenced.

E-conveyancing

While each of the above pieces of legislation is extremely important for various reasons, I want to take the time to focus on e-conveyancing as a project. For clarity, Mr. Speaker, I will briefly explain what e-conveyancing is.

The term e-conveyancing, or electric conveyancing as noted by the Lawyers Conveyancing in Australia, **refers to convincing transaction settled electronically through the platform provided. The representatives of the parties and their financiers participate in electronic workspace where:**

- **Registry instruments are prepared and electronically signed ie. (the transfer, the mortgage, the discharge/release of the mortgage);**
- **Duty may be paid as a settlement disbursement;**
- **The balance of the purchase money and its disbursements are agreed;**
- **The documents to be lodged for registration are checked and pre-settlement**

- **At the agreed settlement date and time, provided the documents are in order for registration, the balance of the purchase money is paid and the proceeds of settling are disbursed; and finally, Mr. Speaker,**
- **The relevant registry instruments are electronically lodged for registration (which usually follows that same day).**

Thus, not only is there built-in efficiency, but I am sure it would be well appreciated by those in the surveying and real estate business.

In most cases, electronic conveyancing does not cover the whole of the conveyancing transaction, just the preparation for and the execution of, the settlement and registration.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the settlement itself, the platform is essentially a virtual settlement room. It is with this in mind, and considering the significant growth in the Cayman real estate market that the Cayman Islands Government revenues derived from; and the Lands and Survey Department embarking on the implementation of e-conveyancing with the support of the Ministries that this will work. This is all against the backdrop of efficiency and the broader e-governance strategy of modernisation which commenced with the former Minister for George Town North and is now being continued by this Government and the Department of Lands and Survey currently digitising the land records as a measure for improving our service delivery.

Online Land Registration System (OLRS)

The development of an e-conveying system will include an Online Land Registration System (OLRS) which shall facilitate the online uploading of data and documents from the customers and other departments. These will include land registration documents, surveys, valuation reports, and all other supporting documents. An electronic land registration system will have a positive effect, both internal and external, on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department's services. The OLRs will also allow for improvements in the Department's accountability and transparency in all of its processes and procedures.

Mr. Speaker, this computerised system will allow for the creation of online access platforms for individuals and businesses alike to quite easily request services, register complaints, and submit payments. The digital service will also improve our revenue collection while lowering the costs associated with service delivery.

I will also note here, that over the past year, the Department has developed a new user-friendly platform which has replaced the previously used and now defunct Windows 7 application.

All these innovations combined, Mr. Speaker, are aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness

of the Lands and Survey Department, while also providing customers with better service experiences at a lower cost to the Cayman Islands Government.

Talent development

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to speak of the Caymanian talent development being undertaken in the Lands and Survey Department. Through the Ministry, we are committed to providing talent development opportunities for our Caymanians and we are fervently working not only towards increasing the number of Caymanians in the department, but ensuring that they are developing for the leadership roles within it—after all, it is a very important department. Qualified and capable Caymanians who have expressed interest in growing in the organisation have been identified. To this end, the Ministry's Chief Officers, and those responsible, under Section 5 of the Constitution, have created a succession plan for the Department in accordance with the Public Service Management Act and Personnel Regulations. Just to add, Mr. Speaker, the Succession Plans contemplate that by the end of 2022, Mr. Speaker, the Department will have a Caymanian in the Director and newly-established Deputy Director, posts.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: This succession plan identifies key roles in the Department and provides a clear pathway for Caymanians to take up these roles.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is safe for me to say that this is what the Honourable Deputy Governor means when he says a World Class Civil Service; not only are there positions, but in consultation with his dedicated Chief Officers he has allowed them to make it known that the positions are available, and clearly state what is the path from Point A to B to get these positions, so they can plan for their careers and their future.

While the plan has not identified a Caymanian and let me say that again: While in this plan that I am speaking to, we have not picked out a Caymanian, the Department has created new trainee roles for young Caymanians as entry-level positions in each section in the Lands and Survey Department—that is:

- The surveying section;
- The valuation section;
- The [National] Government Information Services (GIS) and mapping section; and
- The lands registry section.

Mr. Speaker, each trainee will be provided with on-the-job experience, [plus] the Department will facilitate the trainees' tertiary education in the specified field of study required for that section. We are educating them on one side, and now we are providing experience on the other side—providing opportunities so that

community can build country. Upon completion of the requisite qualification, the trainee will enter into the Department's succession plan for upward mobility within the organisation.

Coastal Navigational Chart

Mr. Speaker, as most Members will be aware from the recent press release, by year-end the Cayman Islands will have an up-to-date Coastal Navigational Chart through the ongoing Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) Survey, in collaboration with the UK Hydrological Office (UKHO). The UKHO is also providing new tidal gauge monitoring equipment which will be installed at key locations across all three Islands, and monitored by the Lands and Survey surveying team. This new data and information will greatly assist Hazard Management Cayman Islands with more accurate storm modelling.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is critical to point out that in 2022 the UKHO will also be facilitating a deep-water survey. Note aforementioned, that the LIDAR survey is considered for our coastal shallow waters up to 40 metres below the ocean surface. The planned deep water survey, will cover up to 7,000 metres below the ocean's surface, and is being conducted through another Public/Private Partnership facilitated by the UKHO.

The information gleaned from these surveys will be owned by the Cayman Islands Government and will be used solely at the discretion of the Government.

The combination of the Coastal Shallow Water and Deep Water Surveys will be critical in understanding the ocean currents around these Islands; provide great insight for storm modelling and navigational purposes; local fishing; maritime boundary negotiations between ourselves, Cuba and Jamaica, and a host of other uses, Mr. Speaker.

Five-year Revaluation

Turning quickly to the valuation section, Mr. Speaker, our Valuation and Estates Section at Lands and Survey is concluding its five-year revaluation of the entire portfolio of government properties. This includes our SAGCs that will feed into the year end's accounts, [as well as] all operational property including the Government Administration Building, airports, health and sports facilities, plus non-operational Crown properties.

The Five-year Revaluation directly contributes to the governance of the entire Cayman Islands' Government's accounts. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that, based on current market values, we are expecting that the final report will show a significant increase in the value of the Cayman Islands Government's assets. This monumental task was completed in addition to other significant work undertaken by the valuation section of the Department.

Within the Department, Mr. Speaker, the valuation section is a small team of nearly 10 persons and

it is responsible for other tasks such as the calculation of stamp duties; the Cayman Islands Government's lease negotiations; road compensation valuations, and valuations and negotiations for land acquisition, just to name a few.

Surveying Section

I would just like to take a few moments to speak on the Department's surveying section, Mr. Speaker, which is currently led by two ably-qualified and competent Caymanians.

Based on the workload, this section in the Lands and Survey Department has been woefully understaffed, based on the workload over the past few years. I am happy to report that this Government has seen fit to increase the staff complement in this section in order that they may more effectively and efficiently carry out this needed work, which includes the vast majority of surveys for our public roads.

We heard the Minister for Infrastructure [refer to] "roads he will build"; I take him at his word because in the few months he has been here he is, certainly, quickly replacing the nomenclature of the action man in the form of the Member for North Side. So we have to ensure that Lands and Survey is able to keep up with the surveys for these public roads, so they will not slow down his and the Government's programme.

GPS Mapping Section

Mr. Speaker, not only did this Government see fit to increase the surveying section's staff complement, but we are also increasing the staff complement of its sister section, [namely,] the GPS Mapping Section; both work closely together—they develop and produce what are known as Boundary Plans (BPs) and the Prescribed Composite Maps (PCMs). I must say that I am extremely excited for this Department's upcoming works, Mr. Speaker, and the extraordinary level of support provided to them by the PACT-Government in this new budget.

District Administration

With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to speak quickly to District Administration before time does not permit me to do so.

Our Government's Broad Outcome of providing solutions to improve the well-being of our people so that they can achieve their full potential has been, and remains, the focus of District Administration.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, the Sister Islands would not function without the terrific work that is carried out at District Administration. I often joke with the District Commissioner to tell him that he is the de-facto Governor; that with much less HR and other functionalities, it is a mini-government that they have to operate there, but they do their very best and I am very proud

of the team there. This is true for all the sections that fall under District Administration, from Departments to Agencies to Units. The common mantra is, *if you need something in the Sister Islands, contact District Administration.*

Mr. Speaker, on the subject of District Administration that is under my purview in recent months, I am no stranger to it, having been born and bred a Cayman Bracker and having responsibility for the Department earlier in my political career as well.

I am glad though, Mr. Speaker, to say that we worked collaboratively over the past few months to address and remedy several immediate concerns that resulted in a positive impact being made in the Sister Islands' community. We now look forward to implementing new programmes and initiatives; and enhancing existing programmes and initiatives, to improve the lives of all of our people in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry, through the Department of District Administration, will continue to expand and upgrade the Sister Islands' road network; expand the District Administration Building to facilitate improved services and create a one-stop atmosphere; expand and improve the disaster management capabilities in our Sister Islands; expand and upgrade the public beach facilities and add public restrooms in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

We will seek to expand our cemetery space, in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman—it is becoming especially urgent in Little Cayman; continue upgrades and repairs in the related park facility; expand and improve sporting facilities which would include provision of a sports field in Little Cayman. The workmen there have been asking for it, and we are happy that we will be able to complete this.

Mondo track

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry and the Department of District Administration are working diligently to finalise the procurement and installation of a Mondo track for the Cayman Brac Sports field which will afford aspiring athletes in the Sister Islands with appropriate infrastructure to train and develop their skills to become world-class competitors. The new Mondo surface is one of a number of upgrades and improvements that are envisioned and are being investigated for the improvement of the Brac Sports Complex. It will be similar to what we put in two years ago at the national track here in George Town for CARIFTA.

The intention, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that our children and people in the Sister Islands are afforded the same opportunities as people on the biggest sister Island so that they can develop their skills and talents to the best of their ability, thus continuing to meet Broad Outcome No. 3, which is: **Providing solutions to improve the well-being of our people so they can achieve their full potential.**

Mr. Speaker, in addition, I have also requested, and this Government passionately believes—like I said several times in my contribution—that community creates country, [and so] has approved new appropriations to facilitate the start of deep-well streetlight programmes in the Sister Islands, which I mentioned earlier in my address. We would also meet Broad Outcome No. 8: **Building a modern infrastructure to ensure the successful future of our three Islands.**

Mr. Speaker, two of the main success stories of District Administration include, but are not limited to, the creation of new roads to provide needed infrastructure (particularly on the Bluff) and the continuation in Little Cayman; provide needed support to the most vulnerable, which has [been] and remains very important to myself and my colleague from Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for all Members and the wider public, especially in Grand Cayman, to recognise that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman do not have the same framework that the larger Island has, such as the Needs Assessment Unit. I am so happy that my honourable colleague who is now responsible for the Children and Family Unit has pledged that he is going to reform it. He has already started to make it more user-friendly, to enhance the privacy and the delivery of the Department. After all, not only do we ask the question: Who are we developing for, but who are we delivering to on time and the relevancy of that. I have every confidence that he and his able Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for Savannah, will do a sterling job in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, the assistance to indigent persons which started with you many, many years ago when it was not invoked to do so has been significant. There was and remains a very large demand and through my initiative and the support of the Government, we have been able to meet the needs even during COVID and we have assisted, and are on track to assist the most vulnerable of our community, with approximately 50 projects through the Sister Islands' Home Repairs Assistance Programme.

Mr. Speaker, we found just after elections that the need was great there and this Government continued what was started in the previous Government and got additional funds so that we would have adequate funds not just for the Clean-up Programme but for the Homes Assistance Programme to take us through the end of December and again this year in the budget, Members will see that there is allocation for the continuation of these two very-needed programmes.

Hurricane shutters

Mr. Speaker, my colleague and I know what it is to get plywood calls in the Sister Islands every time there is a storm threatening the jurisdiction, as I am sure happens on Grand Cayman, as well; while hurricane shutters may not seem like a necessity, I will say

it is much more sustainable and less time consuming than purchasing plywood every year. Therefore, the installation of hurricane shutters for our most vulnerable is a sustainable way to provide assistance to those in need, [and so] the Housing Programme policy has been streamlined to include it.

Sister Islands Clean-up Programme

Mr. Speaker, the Sister Islands' beaches and community Clean-up Programme is also near and dear to my heart. It was initially called Pride and then NiCE; for now in the Sister Islands, we call it the Community Clean-up Programme. You and I were at the heart of the creation of this programme over 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker.

The programme engages many unemployed Cayman Brackers, Little Caymanians and now even Grand Caymanians. Being a Bracker, you will understand why I broke it into three categories, but we are all Caymanian. Since COVID they come across to us from the big city of Grand Cayman. We gladly receive our brothers and sisters with open arms, and they have been helping us keep Cayman Brac and Little Cayman very, very clean.

Mr. Speaker, upon taking up the reins of District Admin, I ensured that the necessary funding was in place to add cohorts, so that the programme could continue to fill the gap in the community; I am therefore happy to have been able to positively engage over 60 Caymanians per year, providing them with a lifeline during this difficult time and right up to Christmas Eve this year. We will further enhance and improve the programme in the coming years, to innovatively and creatively ensure greater success.

The programme continues to be a key mechanism to reduce illegal activities in the Sister Islands by providing persons involved not only with a monetary reward, but also self-worth and pride. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have procured new shirts with the logo which we will distribute to them in a training session on the second week of January, when we will have the Police Commissioner and a representative from the National Drug Council. [In the] New Year we will also have training and fun activities to kick-start the programme.

Sister Islands' Sports

Mr. Speaker, the Sister Islands' Sports directly contributes to the Government's Broad Outcome [No. 7]: **Utilising sports to enhance the lives of our people.** From the young to the young at heart, the work of the Sister Islands sports is important to our community.

The Ministry through Sister Islands' Sports will continue to improve the lives of all through sport, by using the National Sports Policy and strategic plan and by working hand in hand with my friend and colleague, the new Minister of Sports. Some key strategic initiatives will include the strengthening of the competitive and

Learn-to-Swim Programmes. We have a wonderful 25metre swim facility that was done under the last Government and continues under this Government. I know that the Minister of Sports is moving forward with the creation and implementation of a 50 metre pool in Cayman, which all of the Islands will benefit from.

I pray that my successor will have the support of the next government to also get a 50 metre pool there, because that will allow us to diversify our tourism product and be able to invite those professional swimmers from up North and across different jurisdictions to come here; and they [travel] with their families. I think we really need to look at investing in, and developing, this niche market.

Mr. Speaker, quickly; sports education training is done in our community and in our schools. We continue to strengthen and support the delivery of effective sports programmes—too many to name within the allotted time; enhance the links and coordination among sports and education; and increase the value placed on sport, recreation and physical well-being, and this is so important during COVID;. Therefore, we thank the Government for all the support that we are getting for the Sister Islands' sports.

Public Lands Commission

We are also grateful, Mr. Speaker, as time winds down, that we have been able to move to the creation and implementation of the Public Lands Commission which supports our climate change, resilience and sustainable development. It will also begin to regulate and permit commercial activity and public lands where suited and appropriate.

Water Authority

The Water Authority, which is having its Annual Christmas Party on Friday, is another authority that I am extremely proud of; it is one department that I never really have to visit, but do because I enjoy it. Their very capable leader, Ms. Gelia Frederick-van Genderen and her team continue to maintain the best water in the Cayman Islands as they carry out much-needed distribution to Cayman Brac.

Mr. Speaker, my time is gone but I ask for your indulgence for five minutes?

[Pause]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I take that as your tacit support.

The Speaker: Please continue.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, sir. Quickly, in concluding, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to confirm a matter which was raised by my honourable colleague from North Side. Yes, we do have to dig up

the roads to supply the water when something breaks but the Water Authority always pays the bill on time. Ms. Gelia ensures that it is paid, so that is a third-party revenue to the Department. I am not sure about the other providers, but I can vouch for my Water Authority. I just wanted to stick that in, otherwise I would not be able to go to the party on Friday, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to serve as Minister with responsibility for Education and District Administration. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with the PACT-Government to carry out their initiatives and plans in the upcoming 2022/2023 budget.

I want to thank the Honourable Premier and all of my colleagues with whom I try to work well, to contribute something to the team.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your guidance and your teachings, politically and otherwise before you sat in the Chair, on how we can best contribute to the nation building of this country and I am happy that the PACT-Government has picked up from your vision in this regard, even though it is called something else. There are many aspects within it and I believe, as I interjected much earlier: Yes, *out of many we are one people, but together we are stronger*, Mr. Speaker. Divided we will fall and falling is not an option for Caymanians.

Although I have to sit because my time is gone, I will not rest until I see a united Parliament for a united Cayman Islands because, even though we can be competitive, we must always strive to be a strong coalition.

May it please you Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Premier; we have not quite reached the hour of 4:30, but I think in all good conscience we would not call on anybody at this point.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Are you continuing? The Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Parliamentary Secretary to Housing, Labour and Transport, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and thank the Honourable Premier for allowing me to use a few minutes before we close off this honourable House.

I know that we have an engagement this afternoon and we have to leave early so I promised to be like Henry VIII.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I think you better finish that sentence. "*I shall not keep you long,*" you meant to say?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker and Members of this honourable House, good evening.

I have seen and heard elements of the budget—obviously I was not that involved—and I believe this is a good one to get things done for the people of the Cayman Islands. Just a few days [ago] I was over on the other side, Mr. Speaker, and when you are on that side you have to prepare your debate speech much differently. Obviously, I had to make amendments, so I actually threw that one away with a new spirit.

Although I am of a conservative nature, Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the PACT-Government and in particular the Minister of Finance, Deputy Premier Mr. Chris Saunders, for guiding this process thus far. I spoke to a few of the Government Members and they explained how the budget was actually achieved.

They explained how the Minister of Finance actually spent much time one-on-one with each Minister and Ministry and drilled down to create what has been presented, being mindful that the people of the Cayman Islands must benefit immensely. Again, I applaud the Minister of Finance, being so new to this position, and taking relevant advice from Financial Secretary and others on his team, I am sure, and his experience on budgets from his former life.

Mr. Speaker, I have just come over, so I did not get a chance to be as intimate with this budget as they have, going through all of the nitty gritty, but I trust that my good friend and the PACT team did all [of] their homework and got it right.

I want to say [that] I am so proud of all the young Ministers who made contributions in this honourable House and [how] ably they did so. Despite what some people were saying about lack of experience—in fact, I was one of those—I think the Ministers are proving them wrong thus far.

No major errors were made and yes, there is still some experience to get, but it begs me to reiterate that Caymanians just need a chance and we can conquer anything, it seems and it is in our DNA, Mr. Speaker. Just as our forefathers did, leaving home as boys at 14 years old and coming back home as engineers, chefs and captains; and so young, eager, energised, passionate Ministers: I applaud you, and you should applaud yourselves.

I heard contributions on work permits—one of the areas I think the Deputy Premier will ask me to look at—and some of the public utterances about the stress some companies are having with this, and I would like to say that we need to be real about this. Some companies really do not want to hire Caymanians and they refuse to do so.

Some of the comments are that Caymanians do not have the qualifications; [that] they are lazy or lack the necessary drive; and I say to you, that in the 60's and 70's we started telling our children that they did not have to go to sea anymore because they could wear a necktie and work in a bank and count Mr. Doucet's money.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker, as you know well, banking seemed very sexy back then, and mama's boy did not have to leave his country anymore, travelling on those dangerous high seas. When this started happening, I do not know if we realised that we were turning our backs on the power "We", and the only true form of inward investment this country has ever had. And being the main contributor to our own inward investment was important. With seamen sending their money back home, houses were built; cars were bought; children went to school. All kinds of stuff happened, Mr. Speaker, so there was much going on in this budding change over 50 years ago, so I say to everyone: Do not under-estimate these locals' power.

People are concerned that they are not getting a chance; and not just a chance, Mr. Speaker, but one where employers want you to succeed with an honest chance. I must say, there are many companies willing to motivate Caymanians, and they do not need to file work permits. This needs to be encouraged, Mr. Speaker, and companies who do so and hire Caymanians need to be rewarded.

Though in Cayman we have the same number of transient workers as Caymanians, so it is basically about 50/50, we have an under-employment problem. Some may say that is a good problem, but we need to find a way to reverse the work permit need—decrease the need for them by training those who are willing.

However, there is another problem, Mr. Speaker: We are growing so fast [that] we cannot produce enough Caymanians in [proportion] to the number of jobs created (which is another good problem). So we need to look into this and understand who we are building for.

Yes, we do need work permits. I understand that more than many people know. I am sure many people do. We have had this problem for many years. We need to work closely with companies who have high dependency on transient workers to understand what is really needed, and encourage Caymanians to apply for these jobs and help them with all the soft skills necessary to cope with this global world.

Mr. Speaker, there is much I would love to touch on, but I promised my speech would be brief.

We are still in the middle of a pandemic and I will assist my Government, in any way I can, to have a common sense approach to a problem that no one really knows how to eradicate but to continue with our COVID protocols such as mask wearing, et cetera. We will monitor this every week and learn from mistakes around the world; but recognise, also, that we cannot fear COVID. We have to confront it, and learn to live with it in our midst.

I have ambitions to work with Minister Bryan in the Transport Ministry. We need to have constructive dialogue with the cruise industry regarding doing business in the Cayman Islands, and it cannot be business

as usual, in terms of the construct of how our operators were dealt with, and given the meagre shares in the past. This cannot continue if I have anything to do with it, Mr. Speaker, and Minister Bryan agrees this is an area of concern.

I will work with Minister Jay Ebanks to come up with new ideas and design affordable homes; increasing the inventory so as many Caymanians as possible can achieve their dream in owning a piece of this rock. To own a home is one of the most rewarding things a person can do in their lives, Mr. Speaker.

We have to recognise that there are some people who are not going to go out and apply for a regular job. One of my ideas was to have the NiCE programme three times for year:

- In the spring;
- In the summer, so unemployed persons can get their children ready to go back to school;
- In winter, so they can buy their children's Christmas gifts.

I have not discussed this with the team, so this is only one of my desires, Mr. Speaker, but we can all agree that some of our people will welcome this opportunity. They have proven to be able to manage this.

What I like about the NiCE Programme, Mr. Speaker, is that many of the workers who have shown potential, have transitioned into areas such as Public Works and NRA and that is a beautiful thing.

Mr. Speaker, now to Bodden Town East. The PACT and I have discussed—

The Speaker: How much longer you think?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Not much longer, Mr. Speaker; probably not even five minutes.

The Speaker: Okay. Continue.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The PACT and I discussed many things for Bodden Town East, one of which is already in the budget—the long overdue Bodden Town School Hall.

I thank the Minister of Education for having the same vision and making this a reality. The one we have now can possibly hold about 50 people, and everybody else has to hold their foot outside [whereas] the new school hall will hold about 675 people and will also [serve] as a hurricane shelter, which is really needed for the Bodden Town area.

Mr. Speaker, we also discussed the Cumber Avenue, Belford and Midland Acres flooding problems and will come up with solutions for this humbugging matter that disrupts the lives of people and damages so many persons' property.

We discussed road paving for Belford, Midland and Lookout Gardens; completing the Bright Court Park; the Frenchman Park in the Breakers area; and developing a new beach park in the area of Midland

Acres and Pease Bay, on a new property bought just about two years ago.

We also discussed creating a boardwalk and lookout area for birdwatching at Meagre Bay Pond, so persons can enjoy the environment. The Department of Environment (DOE) is already in favour—we had to get their approval first.

Mr. Speaker, we discussed finding the funding for a mini hospital on Anton Bodden Road. An outline business case was done and [it was] decided this was the most strategic area to place a “mini hospital”, as I call it. We have also discussed beautifying Bodden Town properly and giving it the sizeable uplift that it needs.

Mr. Speaker, I think that Bodden Town should have its own bush cutter and “water suction” truck (if that is what it is called), not because we are the fastest growing or the largest constituency, but it takes too long to get our roadsides cut; and [as] we have to share the suction truck with every other district, it takes too long to remove the standing water [following] heavy rains.

Mr. Speaker, this is [also] something I have spoken about over and over again: Having a craft market in Bodden Town and teaching our people to make crafts and set up shop, so that tourists can have another reason to stop and shop with us in Bodden Town.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister said earlier, I was one of the first to have a programme in Bodden Town that put hurricane shutters on the homes of the elderly. I think we need to continue that because they are more than likely to need persons to help them during an approaching hurricane.

As I wrap up, Mr. Speaker, another initiative is free Wi-Fi like my colleagues MPs Connolly and Wight did in Winsor Park. It is a beautiful thing for persons to be able to go into an area and get free Wi-Fi.

Mr. Speaker, as I said I would not be long, but I wanted to ensure that my voice was heard during this budget process.

It is quite new for me, coming from one side to the other, and having to do a speech from what I have heard so far, and from what Ministers have told me that has been included in the budget [without] knowing everything about the budget or having great intimacy with it, because it is a large document. In fact, this document is so large you may need to get a bulldozer to come in here to pick them up.

The next time we have a budget in this House, I really do not want to see all this paper being used in this honourable House.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Not with everybody having a laptop. There is no need for us to print all these—half of these books we are not even going to look at.

I want to say [that] I believe history will be kind to me, Mr. Speaker; and I want to do the best not only for my constituency of Bodden Town East, but for this

country. I think that anything that we can do, even if it is 1 per cent that we can offer to make things better in this country, Mr. Speaker, that is the reason I am over on the side: To give any support that I can. Sometimes I forget how versatile I am and the things and experience that I have had in the past and that could lend such support in many areas.

Mr. Speaker, I know of the time; there are many more things that I could have said, initiatives that I have done over the years, et cetera. I think there will be other opportunities to speak about that, but I wanted to commend the PACT-Government again for being more aggressive than I would have ever thought. I would have never thought to be that aggressive in terms of a budget, but now that I [get] the vision, I understand what they are trying to achieve. I am proud to be here to assist you all.

Thank you very much, Premier; thank you very much, Deputy Premier; thank you very much, Ministers. Thank you very much, Parliamentary Secretaries. Thank you to the coalition Government that I sat in. I have nothing ill to say about them—I had a great experience over there—but you know, when your district is looking at you to get things for them, you need to find a way to get it, and this is a way of me contributing.

I feel proud of the decision that I made, in trying to assist the Government, and I pray that all 19 of us in this House can at least come to some common ground on many of the things that we should not fight over, like COVID and other social issues that I heard Honourable Minister Ebanks talk about this morning—what a great speech he had this morning.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: And the Honourable Minister of Education.

You know, I am so proud of you guys; I mean, I heard all the Ministers: Mr. Bryan, Minister Jay—very surprising to everybody else, very vociferous. I heard all the Parliamentary Secretaries speak, and I am just so proud.

The reason I am so proud, Mr. Speaker, if you would allow me to say, is that in Cayman there was almost a situation where you had to recycle the politicians. You know what I mean, Mr. Speaker; you have been here, you are the Grandfather of the House. It was one iteration or the next where one person would be on the Opposition one year and the next year they would be on the Government and there was not a great pool of politicians. I am glad that we were able to inspire younger politicians to come and say, *look, just because I am young it does not mean I cannot join one of the elected Members and learn more about politics.*

All 19 Members of this House, I am saying to you: let us not have a situation where we are 70 years old and we have no person who we have trained to come behind us. And let us not train just one person; get several persons. Some people may lose interest

over the years...and let us try to get many more women involved in politics.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I mean, my daughter...

I do not know why—maybe because I got elected three times. Now she is attending university in the UK, studying political science and international business. I am wondering why she chose that, I would have told her not to—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: And I say that in jest, she would kill me if she heard that. I am sure she will.

Before I close I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that today is my mother's birthday—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: As well as my wife's grandmother's and my employee's Ms. Donna's birthday, so I want to say Happy Birthday to them.

Keep your prayers going; there are two people from Central Bodden Town who were mothers to me—Ms. Joanne and Ms. May; they are very, very low, and I really want you to keep them in your prayers. We lost one earlier, and the doctors brought her back. Please keep them in your prayers.

Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful country. Everyone who comes here does not want to go back. Let us find a way. There is a reason why people love the Caymanian spirit. There is a reason why people come here. Let us ensure that when people come here, they appreciate the native. Find a way to interact just like they did, 60, 70 years ago; interact with the natives and appreciate them. Appreciate their history, learn about it, and appreciate living amongst us and understanding that we need to live too and help us. Share things with us if our minds are not as global as yours, but we welcome you because every one of us in here has grandfathers or mothers and fathers from somewhere else, so we are connected.

Thus, I say to you, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of unity and in the great spirit of the singer Black Uhuru—and I know my good friend the Deputy Premier knows him. It says:

Solidarity.

Everybody wants the same thing, don't they?

Everybody wants a happy end.

Everybody wants to work for a living.

What we need is solidarity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and God bless.

The Speaker: The Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Well, for someone who professed some reluctance to start speaking, he certainly acquitted himself well and did not seem to want to stop.

I think I would like to join, and I am sure all of my colleagues do, in the expressions of concern for the individual Members of his constituency; well-known Members of Bodden Town, and we wish them absolutely the best, as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move the adjournment of this Honourable House until 10am tomorrow morning, so that we can attend the school graduation this afternoon.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable Parliament stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10am.

All in favour please say Aye; those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

This honourable Parliament stands adjourned until tomorrow morning, 10 am.

At 4:45pm the House stood adjourned until 10am Friday, 3 December 2021.