



**CAYMAN ISLANDS  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT  
ELECTRONIC VERSION**

**2016/17 SESSION**

**9 June 2016**

*Seventh Sitting of the First  
Meeting*

*(Pages 219-270)*

**Hon Juliana Y O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MLA,  
Speaker**

PRESENT WERE:

**SPEAKER**

Hon Juliana Y O'Connor- Connolly, JP, MLA  
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

**MINISTERS OF THE CABINET**

Hon Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA	<i>The Premier</i> , Minister of Home Affairs, Health and Culture
Hon Moses I Kirkconnell, JP, MLA	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
Hon D Kurt Tibbetts, OBE, JP, MLA	Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure
Hon Marco S Archer, MLA	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon G Wayne Panton, MLA	Financial Services, Commerce and Environment
Hon Tara A Rivers, MLA	Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

Hon Franz I Manderson Cert. Hon., JP	Deputy Governor, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Jacqueline Wilson	Acting Attorney General, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

**ELECTED MEMBERS**

**GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS**

Mr Roy M McTaggart, MLA	Second Elected Member for George Town
Mr Joseph X Hew, MLA	Sixth Elected Member for George Town

**OPPOSITION MEMBERS**

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MLA	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , First Elected Member for West Bay
Mr Bernie A Bush, MLA	Third Elected Member for West Bay
Capt A Eugene Ebanks, JP, MLA	Fourth Elected Member for West Bay

**INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

Mr Anthony S Eden, OBE, JP, MLA	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , First Elected Member for Bodden Town
Mr Alva H Suckoo, MLA	Fourth Elected Member for Bodden Town
Mr Winston C Connolly, Jr, MLA	Fifth Elected Member for George Town
Mr D Ezzard Miller, MLA	Elected Member for North Side
Mr V Arden McLean, JP, MLA	Elected Member for East End

**APOLOGIES**

Hon. Osbourne V. Bodden, MLA	Minister of Community Affairs, Youth and Sports
------------------------------	---

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT  
THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET ADDRESS  
FIRST MEETING OF THE 2016/17 SESSION  
THURSDAY  
9 JUNE 2016  
10:29 AM  
Seventh Sitting**

*[Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Speaker, presiding]*

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

I invite the Honourable Deputy Governor to say prayers.

### PRAYERS

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz Manderson:** Thank you. 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 Legislative Assembly 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; Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; 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 Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers of the Cabinet, ex officio Members and Members of the Legislative Assembly, 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.

### ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

**The Speaker:** There are none.

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

**The Speaker:** There are none.

### PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** There are none.

### PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** The House will just take a one minute suspension.

Please stay in your chairs.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Finance.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS PLAN—REPORT ON THE ACTUARIAL VALUATION FOR FUNDING PURPOSES AS AT JANUARY 1, 2014

#### JUDICIAL PENSION PLAN—REPORT ON THE AC- TUARIAL VALUATION FOR FUNDING PURPOSES AS AT JANUARY 1, 2014

#### PARLIAMENTARY PENSION PLAN—REPORT ON THE ACTUARIAL VALUATION FOR FUNDING PURPOSES AS AT JANUARY 1, 2014

**Hon. Marco S. Archer, Minister of Finance and Economic Development:** Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this Honourable House the three following actuarial valuation reports. Those being the:

- Public Service Pensions Plan—Report on the actuarial valuation for funding purposes as at January 1, 2014;

- Judicial Pension Plan—Report on the actuarial valuation for funding purposes as at January 1, 2014;
- Parliamentary Pension Plan—Report on the actuarial valuation for funding purposes as at January 1, 2014.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak to the reports?

**Hon. Marco S. Archer:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I may have just one minute—

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Marco S. Archer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, with respect to these pension plans, perhaps it would be helpful if I first explained some of the terminology that is often used interchangeably. So, Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands public sector, the term “pension plan” refers to the set of rules that govern the operation of pensions such as eligibility to receiving pensions, how pensions are calculated and the amount of contributions to be made to pensions by public servants and their employers, that being the Cayman Islands Government along with the statutory authorities and Government-owned companies.

Madam Speaker, the term “pension fund” refers to a legal entity that is established to receive pension contributions from employees and employers to make pension payments to pensioners, to own assets, and to acknowledge liabilities.

Madam Speaker, [in] the Cayman Islands there are three public sector pension plans and three public pension funds. Under section 10 of the Judges’ Emoluments and Allowances Order, 2005, section 10 of the Parliamentary Pensions Law (2010 Revision) and section 12 of the Public Service Pensions Law, (2013 Revision), it is required that there be triannual (that being every three years) actuarial valuations of public sector pension funds in order to determine the following:

1. The rate or rates of contribution required for the pension funds to meet their liabilities;
2. Whether the funds are capable of meeting their long-term liabilities at the current rate or rates of contribution.

Madam Speaker, the actuarial reports reflect a combined value of CI\$177 million deficiency with respect to the three public sector pension funds. Madam Speaker, perhaps I should say that the pension fund with respect to the judicial fund, that fund does not have a deficiency. So this is primarily with respect to the Public Service Pensions Fund and the Parlia-

mentarians Pension Fund. So, Madam Speaker, the next triannual actuarial valuations are to be carried out with an effective date of 1 January 2017, or approximately six months, seven months from now. So I would expect, we would have had one in January 2011, and then we would have had the one I am now presenting, in January 2014, and the next one is due January 2017.

Madam Speaker, I would like to explain why the deficiency is not a cause for alarm, but nevertheless something to be dealt with, otherwise it does become alarming one day. With respect to the reports that have just been tabled, that actuarial deficiency results from comparison between the value of assets as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 and the calculated value for liabilities that arise from future benefits due to public servants. The value of those future benefits is then discounted back to the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014. So as of the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014, the three public sector funds have assets with a combined total value of CI\$447.2 million. The value computed for future benefits due to public servants discounted back to the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014, stood at CI\$624.2 million.

The difference between the total assets of CI\$447.2 [million] and discounted future benefit obligations of CI\$624.2 million equates to the CI\$177 million actuarial deficiency that I stated earlier.

It is important to note that the Government is permitted to address the actuarial deficiency over a 20-year period. The objective, Madam Speaker, is to eliminate such a deficiency by the end of the 20-year period. The elimination of the deficiency will be achieved by the following:

1. The Government continuing to make payments to reduce the past service liability amount in the 2016/17 Appropriation Bill which is a summary of the detail 2016/17 Budget. CI\$17.1 million is included with respect to past service pension liability. That figure, Madam Speaker, of CI\$17.1 million is in addition to monthly pension contributions that are based on percentages of public servants salaries and wages.
2. The Public Service Pensions Board [PSPB] is expected to continue earning robust returns on the investment of assets of the public sector pension funds.
3. By conducting the triannual actuarial valuations to recommend to the Government, the pension contribution rates required for the assets of the public sector pension funds in order to keep up with value of benefits accruing to the public servants, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I know for many people they are wondering why there is a deficit. How did it arise? But, Madam Speaker, a brief history of the public sector pension arrangements should help to explain why there is an actuarial deficiency that exists at present.

Public sector pension arrangements were initiated in 1963. From 1963, the year pensions originated, Madam Speaker, to the establishment of the Public Service Pensions Fund on the 1st of January 1990, is approximately 27 years. Therefore, when the Public Service Pensions Fund was established in January 1990, it inherited approximately 27 years of pension liabilities but did not have any assets to meet those liabilities. Therefore, a deficiency existed on the very first day of the funds existence, or from the day of creation. This fund was established with effect from the 1st of January 1990, but no benefits could be paid out of the fund during the 1990s since it was not capable of meeting the projected liabilities after taking into account the contributions and earnings of the fund.

During the 1990s and also in prior years, Madam Speaker, pension payments were made directly from central Government's general revenues. Since the year 2000, pension payments have been made from the public sector pension funds and not from central Government's revenue. This in itself is evidence that although there is an actuarial deficiency, the actuarial deficiency does not pose an immediate financial danger to the continued payment of pensions by the public sector pension funds. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the Government discloses the value of the actuarial deficiency in its financial statements demonstrating transparency with respect to the actuarial deficiency.

In summary, Madam Speaker, the existence of an actuarial deficiency is not a reason for immediate concern because the Government, as I've stated earlier, has approximately 20 years to eliminate the deficiency, and it is taking the necessary action to do so. In the meantime, payments of monthly pensions continue to be made from the public sector pension funds without difficulty.

Madam Speaker, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 the actuarial valuation reports contained recommendations for pension contribution rates and Cabinet has accepted those recommended rates. With respect to the recommendations for the Judicial Pension Plan, a total of 30 per cent of pensionable pay has been recommended for the defined contribution element of the plan. And 10 per cent has been recommended as a contribution for the defined benefit part of the plan. With respect to recommendations for the Parliamentary Pension Plan, Madam Speaker, 58.2 per cent of the pensionable pay has been recommended for the defined benefit part of the plan and 12.4 per cent of pensionable pay has been recommended for the defined contribution element of the plan.

With respect to the recommendations for the Public Service Pensions Plan, 16.3 per cent of pensionable pay has been recommended for the defined benefit part of the plan. And 12.4 per cent of pensionable pay has been recommended for the defined contribution element of the plan. For individual statutory

authorities and Government companies, contribution rates are specified in the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 report on the public sector pension plan.

Madam Speaker, in order to catch up with the increased pension contribution rates as recommended by the January 2014 reports, the Government will be making an additional payment of CI\$18 million to the Public Service Pensions Board by the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2016. This additional payment of CI\$18 million is the extra amount required of the Government to make good or to make whole the contribution that will reduce the past service liability amount for the three fiscal years that will end on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2016.

Madam Speaker, it is important to explain that the pension actuarial valuation reports that have been tabled today are funding valuations. Meaning, these reports recommend the amount of cash contributions that Government should make in order to fund pension benefits adequately. The 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2014 pension funding valuation report differs from pension accounting valuation reports with the pension valuation accounting reports being used to determine the pension amounts that are reported in the Government's financial statements in order to comply with international public sector accounting standards.

Madam Speaker, the estimated pension funding valuation actuarial deficiency, as stated earlier, is CI\$177 million. This is the combined amount that is derived from the three funding valuation reports tabled earlier. However, the estimated pension accounting valuation actuarial deficiency as of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2015, is CI\$421.3 million. This amount of CI\$421.3 million less reductions thereto, by virtue of additional payments in the fiscal year 2015/16 and the 2016/17 fiscal period, forms the basis of the past service pension liability figure that is shown in the Government's 2015/16 and 2016/17 forecast financial statements, amongst a CI\$403.4 and CI\$388.3 million, respectively.

Madam Speaker, since the results from funding valuations and the accounting valuations of pensions differ mainly because of the need to use a different discount rate in evaluations, Honourable Members and the public should not compare the pension liability estimates provided in the funding valuation reports tabled today with the pension liability estimates contained in the Government's forecast financial statements for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, the Government will pass regulations to give legal effect to the pension contribution rates that I've previously outlined. But, Madam Speaker, I should add that contrary to what was reported in the *Cayman Compass* on Monday, June 6, 2016, in the last sentence of an article entitled, "Cayman's 20-year pension bill: \$320 million.", this is the liability of the Cayman Islands Government, Madam Speaker, and not a liability of the civil servants and public servants. Therefore, it will not result in a pay cut for the civil servants or public serv-

ants. The past service liability is a liability of the Government and it will be at the expense of the Government, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Premier.

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 14(3)

**The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, today being Thursday, and the day set apart for Private Members' business, further to the agreement we have reached, I move the suspension of the relevant Standing Orders, Standing Order 14(3) in order that Government business may take precedence over Private Members' business today.

**The Speaker:** If there is no debate, the question is that Standing Order 14(3) be suspended to allow Government business to take precedence over Private Members' business. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** I believe the Ayes have it. Accordingly, Standing Order 14(3) is hereby suspended.

**Agreed: Standing Order 14(3) suspended.**

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

**The Speaker:** There are none.

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, Elected Member for North Side:** Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Member for North Side.

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:** In relation to questions, Madam Speaker, can I have an explanation from the Government, either the political arm or civil service arm as to why questions are not being answered. I have questions that are outstanding and I think this is the third sitting on which no questions have been listed for answers.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Premier.

**The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for raising the issue. I was wondering the same thing myself, and I will check into it because as far as I am aware, all the answers

are ready. I don't know whether they have been sent to the House or not, but as far as I am aware, all the answers are ready.

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.  
Honourable Member for East End.

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Speaker:** Sorry, I didn't see an attempt for following up, but please go ahead.

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:** Madam Speaker, there seems to be some confusion because the Premier says that to the best of his knowledge the answers have been prepared. The information I am getting from the staff is that they don't have the answers and that is why the questions are not being put on the Order Paper.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:** But my position is that Standing Orders require that the questions be listed on the Order Paper and Standing Order 22 also provides for Ministers to rise and apologise if they don't have the answers and not just leave us over here in some kind of forgotten land.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Premier.

**The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin:** Madam Speaker, as long as I have been here the practice is, and I do not believe the Standing Orders require questions to be put on the [Order] Paper that have not been approved and to be listed by the Business Committee. There is little point in putting the questions on the [Order] Paper if the answers are not available. I will undertake to find out what the issue is. Why the answers are not here.

I understand from the Clerk that they are not with the House and therefore the issue is up at the Government Administration Building where I do have some influence. So, I will see what I can do over there. I apologise to the Member and any other Members who have outstanding questions. We will get it resolved.

**The Speaker:** Member for East End.

### PROCEDURAL MATTER

**Mr. V. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End:** Madam Speaker, on a procedural matter, since we are moving on now from the presentation of reports, yesterday there was a procedural intervention on whether or not. . . how the Dragon Bay Agreement was being laid, and whilst I understand that it is the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Law (2005 Revision), it

didn't specify the section of that law. I wonder if we can have that resolved this morning, Madam Speaker.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member for East End, I was reliably informed by my Clerk that it required the laying on the Table and waiting for 21 days, as you rightly intimated last sitting.

Do you require further clarification?

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** No, that's okay, Madam Speaker, because that is section 10 of the law. So, thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk.

## STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### BILL

### SECOND READING

#### APPROPRIATION (JULY 2016 TO DECEMBER 2017) BILL, 2016

#### DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Education.

Might I remind the House again that I call three times; at the conclusion of the third time, I will be calling for the mover to wind up.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers, Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs:** Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the Budget Debate for the 2016/17 Budget. First of all, I would like to thank the Governor for delivering the Throne Speech, thank the Premier, and the Minister of Finance for delivering the Policy Statement and the Budget Address on behalf of the Government.

Madam Speaker, I believe it is clear that after hearing the highlights and the accomplishments of this Government as captured in the Throne Speech, Policy Statement, and Budget Address, there is absolutely no question that we are a Government that gets things done. And, Madam Speaker, please permit me to reiterate some of the key accomplishments to date, as was highlighted earlier in these speeches.

Madam Speaker, we have reduced fees for small businesses and assistance to entrepreneurs. This has been done. We have introduced a national minimum wage. This has been done. We have made critical updates to the National Pensions Law—done. We have amended the Trade and Business Licensing Law—done. We have approved and updated the Builders Law—done. We have introduced a National Conservation Law—done. We have reviewed the Labour Law and those amendments are currently in train. We have started the completion of the John Gray High School. Madam Speaker, we have reviewed and have improved the education system. The review has been completed and improvements are currently in train.

Madam Speaker, I believe there are also a few additional significant achievements of this Government which were not necessarily specifically highlighted in the Policy Statement or the Budget Address, but I believe that these also should be noted. Madam Speaker, we have succeeded in getting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, commonly known as CEDAW, extended to the Cayman Islands. We have introduced innovative financial services legislation to create innovative products such as the Limited Liabilities Companies [LLC] to encourage industry growth.

Madam Speaker, we have created an environment which has positively impacted employment prospects for locals. We have implemented a concession policy which now requires developers to take best efforts to source and retain Caymanian employees by working directly with the NWDA [National Workforce Development Agency] and CIFEC [Cayman Islands Further Education Centre] to source soon to be school leavers with a specific target to reach 60 per cent Caymanian employment on the project, where possible, as a condition of concessions granted. And, Madam Speaker, we have updated the Educa-

tion Law to create the Legislative underpinning necessary for achieving educational excellence. This has been completed and the Bill is tabled in the Legislative Assembly for debate and adoption in the near future.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that we are a Government that is prepared to tackle the real issues, the difficult issues facing this country, and oftentimes the controversial issues.

Madam Speaker, speaking specifically about my Ministry, to my knowledge, this is the first time in history that a Ministry with responsibility for Education and Employment has embarked on legislative reform of three critical pieces of legislation; namely, the Education Law, the National Pensions Law, and the Labour Law in one term, doing so, following the model template of public consultation and engagement with the public on all three pieces of legislation. While at the same time, spearheading the development of the national minimum wage, again, the first of its kind, conducting a process that was carried out in a way that involved wide consultation and public input, as well as detailed economic analysis of the environment that exists today.

So, Madam Speaker, again, it is clear that we are not afraid to take on the tough issues. We are not afraid to tackle legislation that is controversial. Madam Speaker, those pieces of legislation that I have listed, some of those were controversial some 20 and 30 years ago when they were first introduced. They have remained controversial ever since and so they continue to be controversial today, which Madam Speaker, would explain why previous Government's shied away from dealing with these issues. We are a Ministry that works and gets the job done.

It would be remiss of me not to sincerely thank, on behalf of the Government the hard-working civil servants of the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs and the relevant departments and the schools that fall under the Ministry. Madam Speaker, those hard-working civil servants give, in many respects, in many instances 110–120–130 per cent of their time and energy to carry out the policy objectives of this Government, and I want to thank those individuals who fall in that category who continue to work in the face of difficulties, criticism, controversy, but are there and are committed to ensuring that this Government carries out the policy objectives which we have set when we took office.

Madam Speaker, I would like to at this point take an opportunity to deal with each of the subject matters that fall under the Ministry in turn, and to discuss the accomplishments of the past year, but also to talk about what is intended in the coming fiscal year.

Madam Speaker, turning to education: I think Malcom X said it best. He hit the nail on the head, Madam Speaker, when he said, and I quote, **“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”** Madam Speaker, as I have said in this House on a

number of occasions, the fundamental goals as it relates to education are (1) to establish the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence and (2) to prepare students to take advantage of the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in order to excel in the local economy and to compete in the global economy. Madam Speaker, again, as I have discussed on numerous occasions in this House and, in particular, previous Budget Debates, the six policy priorities established upon taking office in order to achieve those two goals which acted as a guide for the work of the Ministry, the Department of Education Services [DES], as well as the schools, was to look at increasing our international competitiveness and raising standards. There was also a focus on special education needs and disabilities. There was a focus on conflict resolution and crime reduction strategies in the schools. There was also a focus on technical and vocational education and training. There was a focus on information communication and technology and science, technology, engineering, mathematics.

And finally, Madam Speaker, there was a focus on strengthening public/private partnerships in education and training. So, Madam Speaker, this Government, as it relates to education, we have a plan, we've had a plan from the very beginning, and we have been working to execute that plan since we have taken office.

Madam Speaker, we also recognise that education is a process. You would have heard me say that on a number of occasions. It doesn't work in four-year political cycles. It doesn't fit within the neat boxes of our individual ministries or portfolios even. Madam Speaker, over the past three years the work of the Ministry has been geared toward achieving those policy priorities, or focusing on those six policy priorities I have just outlined. But also, it was focused on continuing the implementation of the national Strategic Plan for Education 2012–2017, which, interestingly enough, I discovered is a little more than a rebranding in some aspects of the National Consensus on the future of Education in the Cayman Islands, which was conducted in October 2005, which came about as a result of a National Conference on Education held in September 2005. So, Madam Speaker, the process of reform in education has been ongoing at least for the past 10 years and in many respects, everything that has been done during the previous administration and continuing in this Administration, has its roots from that particular consensus. I am sure, I dare say, Madam Speaker, the work which preceded that particular conference as well.

So, Madam Speaker, even though a lot has happened, even though there have been a lot of new initiatives which have taken root which were developed and implemented during this Administration, which I will outline in some detail, the view has always been for the long term. The view has always been to continue the progress where progress has been



made, strengthen the institutions, which have been set up, which are in place by augmenting them or creating a more robust environment for them to actually take root. But it has also been with a view to address the gaps that exist.

So, Madam Speaker, the Ministry has developed and implemented a number of firsts during this administration in a quest to achieve the fundamental goals of education and all that I've just said to this point. Madam Speaker, as discussed extensively during my Budget Debate, and then again in the fall of last year, a critical undertaking, a critical first, as you would, which was carried out during our second term in office, during the 2014/15 academic year, in particular, was the baseline school inspections. Because, Madam Speaker, it was essential to get a system-wide handle on what was working well and what areas still needed significant improvement given the education reform efforts that, as I've said, had started about a decade ago.

Again, Madam Speaker, in order to really be able to address the gaps, it was important to identify where those gaps may still exist, but also to identify where progress had been made and how to continue to strengthen and build on that progress. And so that, Madam Speaker, was the impetus for why there was a public education system-wide review, both at the system level, the governance level, but also at the individual school's level. And so, Madam Speaker, as a result of the findings of the baseline inspections and the Education Governance Review, it was critical for there to have been developed and put in place a targeted plan of action to address the findings and recommendations coming out of those baseline inspections and the [Education] Governance Review.

So, Madam Speaker, purely because of a timing implication—we got those reports in early summer of 2015. By that time school was out, and so the Ministry was tasked to find a way, because of the nature of the findings of those results, we couldn't wait to then implement or to develop a plan of action the following year to then start to implement changes in this current year. So, the Ministry and the Department of Education Services working very closely with the Office of Quality Assurance, came together and developed this targeted action plan to address these specific issues which began the work to address the issues highlighted that actually took place during this past academic year. Therefore, during this 2015/16 academic year, the work of the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education Services, and the schools has primarily been driven by and focused on carrying out the 2015/16 Plan of Action which was developed in direct response to the baseline inspections of all the public schools which started in November 2014 and culminated in June 2015.

So, Madam Speaker, we've heard, and we continue to hear a lot about studies and reports and things collecting dust on the shelf, but I'm here to

state with absolute confidence that the work conducted in the 2014/15 year as was indicated to be done during the Budget Debate of that year has already started as it relates to trying to find and implementing solutions to the issues highlighted in those reports.

So, Madam Speaker, turning to some key accomplishments this year during the 2015/16 Plan of Action, and carrying out the Plan of Action, that is. The Plan of Action was a detailed document, Madam Speaker, setting out clear lines of accountability, and specific actions spelling out how, when and by whom they would be carried out. Madam Speaker, each action was linked to a schedule of reporting of progress as progress was taking place.

So, Madam Speaker, unlike other strategic plans, including the Strategic Plan for 2012–2017, and previous plans, which were more general in nature outlining strategies without specific actions or lines of accountability, the 2015/16 Plan of Action developed in response to the baseline inspections contains specific, measurable targets and outlined clear rolls and responsibilities of the various players in education. So, Madam Speaker, this was a fundamental shift in the way the work was planned and the way that progress has been monitored and carried out.

Madam Speaker, the various players in education; namely, the school leaders, the principals, the school leaders at the school, the department, the Ministry staff, there has always been—and certainly it came out through when I reviewed the 2005 National Consensus document that I spoke about previously—there had been this concern about a lack of accountability in the education system. So, from as far back as a decade ago, there had been talks about strengthening and increasing and improving accountability in the system. And so, Madam Speaker, to my knowledge the 2015/16 Plan of Action was the first time that such an education plan was developed which included delineated accountability framework that had specifically who was responsible, when is it responsible to be done, who is accountable, and what action should be taken.

So, Madam Speaker, it was not just the first time that such a plan was developed to actually implement specific targeted strategies, holding specific people accountable, it was a first time in a long time (at least I should I say), certainly, for the institutional memories of the people who work in the Ministry. It was the first time for the critical players within the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education Services, and as I said, the actual quality assurance unit to have to come together and develop this plan based on the recommended actions put forward.

Madam Speaker, meetings were held with principals, which I personally attended. As well as teachers and staffs of all schools of which I attended most of them, to discuss a plan of action as it pertained to each school. And, Madam Speaker, upfront, that with respect to the 2015/16 Plan of Action, the

reason the principals weren't involved in the initial development of that plan, again, was purely due to timing, because it was over the summer, the Ministry was tasked to get on with it. Get these reports digested, get a plan of action in place to be implemented at the start of the school year in 2015/16, and so many of the teachers and principals were on summer leave. And it certainly wouldn't have been fair or right to bring them in to, you know, not give them the opportunity to have their hard-earned summer vacation. But, Madam Speaker, this issue was addressed as it relates to the planning or the development of the Plan of Action for this coming year, which I will speak to in just a moment.

So, Madam Speaker, the Plan of Action primarily looked at strengthening leadership in management, as well as improving student progress and achievement. As I said, Madam Speaker, the Plan of Action for 2015/16, the theme for that Plan of Action was establishing a system of accountability. And it was linked directly to recommendations from the inspection reports. It clearly identified a lead person who was responsible and accountable for the actions identified. Madam Speaker, in addition to looking primarily at strengthening leadership and management and improving student progress and achievement, there was some other key areas of focus in the 2015/16 Plan of Action which was improving provision for students with special education needs and disabilities, as well as implementing conflict resolution training and a crime reduction strategy as its relevant to the schools.

So, again, Madam Speaker, some very tangible accomplishments during the 2015/16 school year coming out of the Plan of Action, implemented this year is, for the first time ever, there was the introduction of non-teaching special education needs coordinators and access by every primary school to such coordinators. Madam Speaker, the SENCO [Special Education Needs Coordinator] posts were converted into full-time non-teaching positions in order to allow for more effective use of time and resources to manage the needs of each student with special education needs identified who required support. Madam Speaker, this was an initiative which was a major development and advancement in the education system, as prior to this academic year the SENCO positions also held positions as mainstream teachers or other responsibilities in the classroom, which did not allow for them to really target and focus their time and energy on trying to coordinate the activities and the requirements as it relates to students in our system with special education needs. So, Madam Speaker, not only did the Minister of Education create and formalise the SENCO positions, and working with the DES [Department of Education Services] to try to provide access to each school, the special education needs coordinators also went through and underwent a training

programme developed and implemented throughout this past year as well.

So, Madam Speaker, the object of the targeted training programme was to align the new full-time posts with the necessary training and support to ensure that students, as I said, with SEN [Special Educational Needs] concerns were provided with services to meet their needs. Madam Speaker, this training also provided a succession planning opportunity as many of the special education needs coordinators identified and appointed during the past year were already educators in the system. So this gave them an opportunity to advance in the system, or to develop further skills as it was.

Madam Speaker, professional development policy was implemented and introduced as discussed during the last Budget Debate that I gave, because, Madam Speaker, the quality of teaching is one of the most critical factors impacting student performance. This came out very loud and clear during the baseline inspections, or the results of the baseline inspections, but also research bears this out time and time again as well. And so that is why, Madam Speaker, in order to move toward creating a system of education excellence it was important to formally adopt and make it a requirement for professional development to happen on an ongoing basis.

Madam Speaker, some of the key goals of the professional development policy in action was to build capacity, to build capacity within the system. During the course of this year as a continuation of what started during the last academic year, the Ministry and the department looked to build capacity amongst principals and other school leavers through the provision of the leadership and management tool in the form of the International Leadership Certificate (ILC) offered through the Ontario Principals' Council, but developed specifically for the goals and the needs and the aspirations of the local community. And, Madam Speaker, I spoke quite extensively about that during my last debate. But I just wanted to say, as a continuation—and I gave a statement in this House and I think I outlined over 10 of our principals and deputies who have already achieved the first level of that certification—that during this particular year, the 2015/16 school year, a second cohort of middle managers at the school have started and undergone the first level of this international leadership certificate programme.

Following on, those who completed the first level last year continued on to the second level this year. So, Madam Speaker, this is a clear, tangible outcome of trying to achieve improvements and focus on leadership and management at the school level, but also, again, it provides for succession planning within the system. An issue, Madam Speaker, which we have heard on a number of occasions, concerns about peoples prospects for advancement and development. Not just in the teaching profession or education, but in the civil service as a whole. Madam

Speaker, the strengthening of leadership at the primary school level, when we talk about resources and resources for schools, one of the key things that was highlighted in the baseline reports was that there needed to be a strengthening of the primary school leadership team and so, during the 2015/16 year there was a head of infants and a head of juniors, additional persons who were added to the senior management team at each of the primary schools. Again, to try to deal with what was determined to be a leadership gap in the structure. And so, Madam Speaker, this was implemented, as I said, as a direct response to some of the concerns highlighted at the individual school level.

Madam Speaker, we continued to focus on building capacity of our newly qualified teachers as well. And so during the past two years, 15 newly qualified teachers—10 who started last year during the 2014/15 academic year, and an additional 5 who started this year—have been supported during this two-year programme. Madam Speaker, what was new for this year in terms of building capacity was for, really for the first time, support assistance in the schools were offered, targeted training and professional development. And so support assistant capacity building was a focus for this past academic year.

The year started with targeted professional development sessions for the support assistance, giving them the tools to be an effective support staff member, supporting students with learning challenges, developing and working with individualised education programmes (or IEP for short), helping them to develop their skills in classroom management, helping to develop their literacy and numeracy skills for themselves, but also a strategy to help students, and also helping them to be active participants in helping with the kind of recordkeeping and reporting mechanism which has now been built into the system.

Madam Speaker, also new for this year in direct response to the issues highlighted in the baseline school inspections were some targeted literacy interventions. Madam Speaker, the Response to Intervention, or RTI framework, was introduced across all Year 1 classrooms. This intervention evaluates and analyses the impact of instruction, Madam Speaker, to students who are achieving below their expected level. Madam Speaker, the response to intervention is intended to reduce reliance on special education services by improving the quality of the whole group classroom instruction, and by implementing core instruction with tiered interventions for those students who need it. And, Madam Speaker, using the Response to Intervention model will allow primary schools to close the reading achievement gaps early on to prevent them from becoming long-term reading challenges. And Madam Speaker, we have heard, and again, research will bear out, that by investing in early education, by investing in students who are in their early years of education, really bears the greatest re-

turn. If we can close those gaps, as it relates to literacy and numeracy, when children are in their infant years at primary school, their chances of success exponentially increases as they continue through the system. And that has been some of the issues that the system has been plagued with; that students' achievement. . . and we heard, I believe it was the First Elected Member for Bodden Town in his contribution, highlighted in one of the reports the concern about the gaps widening as the students continue on in the system. By getting the foundation right, by focusing on those fundamental skills during those fundamental years, Madam Speaker, that is the strategy to use in order to increase the chances of success and decrease the need to have those interventions later on in their school career.

So, Madam Speaker, in addition to this new framework introduced at the Year 1 classrooms, there was also a Level Literacy Intervention, or the LLI programme, which was introduced at the primary school levels in Year 2. This is also netting positive results for those students who are currently below grade level.

Madam Speaker, in an effort to positively reform the literacy instruction at the school level, the Department of Education Services and the Ministry have begun to develop the role of lead literacy teachers to support the improvement plans for literacy going forward. And so there will be a lead literacy teacher to act as a school-based resource to help support the development of internal capacity at the schools. This also will provide for additional professional development and learning opportunities for the teachers on the ground.

So, Madam Speaker, a key strategy which was articulated at the beginning of the school year and which was implemented this year during the 2015/16 Plan of Action was the strategic plan for literacy. That strategic plan for literacy is one of the actions falling out of the 2015/16 Plan of Action, Madam Speaker. And that plan sets the target for the end of the 2015/16 academic year; the target being that 85 per cent of our students would be reading on level by the end of Year 1, and working up to 100 per cent of the students reading and writing on level by the end of Year 2 in five years' time. So there is a progression where the targets move year-on-year, increasing year-on-year, because, Madam Speaker, for the first time that I am aware of, the education system has now specific, targeted, measurable goals set in relation to literacy in the early years.

Madam Speaker, we want and we talk about becoming a centre of excellence in education, but we cannot raise standards in education effectively if you don't set standards to achieve in the first place. And so, Madam Speaker, this may have accounted for what many people have deemed to be the complacency of previous Government's as it relates to the pace of progress experienced over the last several years. Madam Speaker, I cannot speak with absolute

certainty about whether or not the 85 per cent of students reading on level by the end of Year 1 has been achieved yet because we still in the final stages of this academic year, but from what I have been told by the staff in the Ministry, the results are very promising as it relates to meeting those target sets, and so I look forward to being able to speak more to that once the final results are in at the end of the year.

Madam Speaker, numeracy intervention initiatives were also continued and introduced at the primary school level in particular. And so, again, the target being to ensure that we improve the abilities for students to develop those fundamental literacy and numeracy skills, essentially, before they leave Year 3, to get that foundation. But, Madam Speaker, also introduced as a part of the Plan of Action this year was that there were specific targets for each child at every year level based on what their expected performance should be using the relevant diagnostic tests.

Madam Speaker, even though there has been a lot of emphasis on setting targets and meeting targets and interventions at the Year 1 and Year 2 level, there has also been targeted goals for each student at the year levels, going on up as well. So, we certainly haven't forgotten about the other children in the system who may not have benefited from these type of interventions when they were in Year 1 and Year 2.

Madam Speaker, in terms of an additional resource, the Ministry added a mathematics coach to help the schools to build a strong foundation in the early years as well, and that coach works specifically with the teachers, helping them to become more effective teachers of mathematics.

Madam Speaker, concurrent with implementing the 2015/16 Plan of Action, there has also been some significant developments and work done as it relates to raising standards in education and increasing our international competitiveness in the long run, by focusing on early childhood care in education. So these are the students, Madam Speaker, who are below the compulsory age of education and so the Early Childhood Care in Education Unit had produced, developed and launched an Early Years Curriculum Framework which I spoke about during the last Budget Debate, but this year that framework has been distributed to all early childhood centres and professional development sessions were conducted for every childhood practitioner in the Cayman Islands during this past academic year as well to give them the tools to be able to actually utilise that curriculum framework which the Ministry had developed and which was approved by Education Council during our tenure.

Madam Speaker, another critical area of concern and also a policy priority for the Government is looking at making sure that we enhance the early childhood assistance programme, allowing persons to access quality childhood education as soon as possible and in a manner which is as affordable as possible. So, Madam Speaker, during this year students, or

children, who were three years prior to September the 1<sup>st</sup> were eligible to receive funding should they meet the criteria or if the families meeting the criteria for funding, and this was a significant change in the age criteria because previously it was three years, six months and it presented a gap in access to funding for those parents because the NAU [Needs Assessment Unit] provided assistance up until three years old, and then the Early Childhood Assistance Programme then kicked in at three years, six months. So there was a window where many children were just dropping out of the early childhood centres because their parents couldn't afford to keep sending them. So the Ministry took a proactive move and dropped that age range so there would be a seamless transition of availability to funding once they meet the criteria.

Also, Madam Speaker, in an effort to try to ensure that we move from a handout mentality to a hand up mentality for those families as well, there has been a revision of the criteria itself for accessing their early childhood assistance programme. So, again, in an effort to address related to poor parenting, an inadequate child-rearing practices, as well, Madam Speaker, as instilling a sense of responsibility amongst parents, there are now three new requirements which were introduced during this academic year, which are attached to the receipt of funding.

Now, Madam Speaker, parents who are unemployed who are eligible for funding must be registered with the NWDA as a job seeker extended to ensure that they receive the services of the NWDA to help them get in, not only with their job search, but also help them to retain and excel in job placement when they are successful in finding employment. Again, Madam Speaker, this is a clear deliverable, as it relates to the welfare to work campaign mandate of the Government. Madam Speaker, parents must now attend at least 75 per cent of the PTA meetings of the child's early childhood centre in order to remain eligible to receive the early childhood care assistance programme. And, again, Madam Speaker, this is to help encourage home/school partnership and collaboration with the child's school early on so that parents develop a sense of responsibility to participate actively in their child's education from as early as possible.

And, Madam Speaker, the third requirement which was added to the funding programme available to those families in need, is that families must take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Family Resource Centre to strengthen the family unit. So, again, Madam Speaker, dealing with issues of strengthening parental skills and how to deal with children and deal with conflict and all of these things which we know the country is challenged with, and so, again, by tying this funding to required actions of the parents we would hopefully develop a sense of people becoming stronger family units, becoming stronger and more self-sufficient, and being able to provide

better for their children to break whatever cycle of poverty that may exist.

So, Madam Speaker, the ECAP programme [Early Childhood Assistance Programme] under this Government has been transformed this year from being a handout to becoming a more of a hand up, not just for the child's sake but also for the family and the parents.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to technical and vocational education and training [TVET], contrary to what has been said in many of the debates here this session, the Ministry continues to expand the TVET provision for students while still in compulsory school. Madam Speaker, during the 2014/15 academic year, the BTEC course offerings and BTEC is a specific qualification as it relates to technical and vocational education and training, those offerings were increased at CIFEC [Cayman Islands Further Education Centre] to include construction and sports and leisure. Madam Speaker, preparing these students for opportunities in the construction industry and the sports tourism, water sports, hospitality industries, again, also giving them the ability to then access the School of Hospitality Studies should they want to continue in that vein, or also now because of the tied Development and Concession policy that has been introduced, more and more construction companies will be working directly with CIFEC to try to source employment as a result of the required policy that has been introduced by this Government, as I said. And, so, Madam Speaker, these are ways that the Government is looking to bridge that gap between formal education and accessing the employment opportunities.

New for this year, Madam Speaker, in the 2015/16 academic year, the TVET offerings have been expanded even further at CIFEC to include creative arts, business, and IT. Madam Speaker, this provides the opportunity for additional high-level courses. These are at the Level 3 courses, so Level 3 courses are equivalent to what would be known as A-Level for many of us that went through this system. So now, students can take creative arts, they can take business, they can take IT from a technical and vocational prospective up to a level of being equivalent to an A-Level. This provides the students to have greater choices, to have greater opportunities to pursue careers in creative media and other emerging industries, which the Government is supporting through the amendments to the relevant IP laws. So, again, there is a clear strategy as it relates to trying to improve and enhance the formal education system to prepare students to take advantage of the opportunities which are being facilitated through the changing of legislation that this Government is also bringing forward, as well as through the entrepreneurial and economic strategies of the Government as well.

Madam Speaker, last year I indicated that the Government had budgeted for the recruitment of a TVET coordinator, still continuing on the fact that

TVET is an important aspect of the advancement of our curriculum. I spoke at length about the fact that the Government in this budget had budgeted for the recruitment of a coordinator and I am happy to say, Madam Speaker, we have delivered. The TVET coordinator has been recruited and their boots are on grounds and the TVET coordinator has been working very diligently, straddling both the Department of Education Services and working at developing and further enhancing the strategy within the schools, but also working with the National Workforce Development Agency to ensure again there is a continuity of this TVET strategy for the country. And so, Madam Speaker, the TVET coordinator was actively involved and participated in the development of the 2015/2016 Education Plan of Action which I will speak to in short order.

Madam Speaker, again, as it relates to making sure that the focus on technical vocational education training goes beyond just talk of many governments of old, as I signalled in my debates previously, and in statements in this House, the Government has indeed appointed a National Training Council to help to develop the broader TVET training and development strategy which engages the key private and public sector employees in the development of this strategy, because these are the people that are the employers. These are the people that are going to be providing and offering the jobs so they need to be at the table and they need to be able to help to shape what this ultimate strategy and the roll-out of the strategy and the various training programmes to be developed under the strategy, because ultimately they are the ones that will be hiring. And so, the Government through, again, working very closely with trying to develop the public/private partnership ethos in education and training has convened this council in order to make sure that the strategies implemented aren't just exercises in academia but actually, are rooted in what the industries need, what the industries want, and what the industries will ultimately be held accountable to deliver on, because they are involved in actually shaping what these persons who go through the various training programmes, the skill sets that they should develop as well as the technical certification required in order to access jobs.

So, Madam Speaker, this is a clear indication. This is a clear, concrete move to addressing some of the key concerns that the country has about, *Well, you know, the bar keeps shifting. The bar keeps moving. First we couldn't get a job because we didn't have the education. Now we have the education, but we don't have the experience.* Madam Speaker, by having the employers at the table helping to develop what these training programmes should be to meet their needs as employers will take away any excuses in the future about not having sufficiently trained and qualified people to take advantage of the job opportunities that they are offering and that will be coming online, as I

said, as a result of the changes to the legislation that we are bringing forward to spur additional economic development.

So, Madam Speaker, as it relates to scholarship provisions generally and more specifically for TVET, the Government does in fact support over 1,350 students [who] are currently being supported either through local or overseas scholarship opportunities. Madam Speaker, this is a significant number so this is a testament that this Government continues to invest in education and training of our people once they leave a post compulsory education. So the scholarship opportunities offered are at the local institutions of UCCI [University College of the Cayman Islands] and ICCI [International College of the Cayman Islands] and other training institutions and also overseas, and the Government has already and continues to support people wanting to study TVET-type courses. There is also a clear criteria outlined on the Ministry of Education as to examples of the types of degree programmes that can be pursued if they want to pursue an actual degree programme.

We heard another Member speaking in the House talking about that TVET is not. . . the world of TVET is very technical and it is very advanced and so pursuing education is critical as a part of that becoming the excellent master plumbers, or becoming excellent electricians, or whatever, so those opportunities are available through the scholarship programme offered through the Education Council, Madam Speaker. So this is already available and we also send a number of students to the various technical schools to get these more specialised degrees that are not offered on-Island. Again, this gives them real opportunities to advance in their careers, as well as those persons pursuing other academic disciplines as well.

So, Madam Speaker, this Government has delivered on our promise to focus on truly developing and launching a holistic TVEC strategy that works with students while they are still in school as well as those school leavers and others who may need to be up-skilled or retooled in order to enter or remain in the job market. And I will also speak to some of the accomplishments of the NWDA as it relates to TVET in a little bit. But, Madam Speaker, there is a strengthened career service offered in the high schools now, which again involves a number of career fairs giving students direct access to employers as it relates to becoming more aware of opportunities that exists.

Madam Speaker, there has been concerns and there continues to be concerns, and quite frankly, there will always be, I think, concerns as it relates to behaviour and issues of behaviour in the schools. These concerns certainly didn't start this administration and whereas we have done some targeted and specific programmes to tackle it, and we are starting to bear fruit as well. But some of the things that we have introduced since April 2014 have been the introduction of the Pastoral Support Worker Programme.

Madam Speaker, these are additional resources, these are additional boots on ground, and these are additional persons working in a number of the primary schools, at the primary school level. These persons act as guides. The help students who are struggling to access the curriculum for whatever reason, and so, Madam Speaker, the Pastoral Support [Worker] Programme currently has five additional persons working in four schools across the system and they currently support 80 students.

Madam Speaker, we have also strengthened the way behaviour and school discipline are managed in the school by restructuring the behaviour management process and the support system, commonly known as SteppingStones and cornerstones, by adding a manager to support these services but also by additional teachers and teaching assistants who work across the system in order to support the individual schools as it relates to some of the issues related to behaviour. And this, Madam Speaker, was implemented as of September of this year.

Madam Speaker, since taking office in May 2011 until now, there have been increased number of school inclusion support specialists that work, as I said, in the school. When we took office, Madam Speaker, there were only four such persons in the system, now there are 11. I say that to say that there certainly has been a progression of investment in resources in the schools even during these times of measured spending expenditure and head counts.

Madam Speaker, I spoke quite extensively about the conflict resolution training such as the Cayman Islands Safe Management and Risk Reduction Training, and some other training courses which were introduced during my last debate, so I won't go into too much detail this time, but suffice it to say that training as it relates to empowering the educators, the people working with our children to become better able to deal with issues of conflict, to de-escalate conflict and to create the kind of more positive school climates by modelling behaviour such as respect, responsibility, and safety. Those continue to happen in our system and are built in to the professional development policy which, as I said, has now been formalised and is being offered in all schools.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to public/private partnerships in education and training, the Minister of Financial Services spoke quite extensively about one of the key partnerships which was developed and launched under this administration, and that is the partnership with Cayman Finance, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Financial Services to give students access and information. A student population which was previously not catered for as it relates to being offered internships and offered the ability to work directly with industry, and so, Madam Speaker, this has certainly filled a critical gap that was in the system previous to having this particular launch. As the Minister said, the pilot launch last year was a re-

sounding success and the participation has increased by 50 per cent and we have now about 75 students; that is, 75 student who will have if they successfully complete the programme and do what they need to do while in the programme in school, they will have an opportunity to have not only increased skills, understanding, and knowledge about the financial services industry, they will have summer placements, *paid* summer placements, in the various partners that fall under the Cayman Finance umbrella. So I want to thank Cayman Finance and also the Minister of Financial Services for continuing to support this public/private partnership in education initiative.

Madam Speaker, I want to turn now to some of the things planned for the 2016/17 academic year. In particular, the Education Plan of Action for 2016/17 which was referenced both in the Throne Speech but also in the Policy Statement, I believe, which the Ministry and the Department of Education Services as well as a number of players in the schools, including the school leaders, have just wrapped up. The Plan of Action for 2016/17 is a continuation of the work started in the summer of 2015 to develop a targeted plan for the academic year in order to address the concerns and raise standards of achievement and opportunities for students. Madam Speaker, the development of the plan involved increased collaboration between Members of the Ministry, the Department of Education Services, and all public schools. This plan was developed over a series of six full-day workshops where participants had the opportunity to identify key issues still remaining in the system to be tackled in the upcoming school year.

So, Madam Speaker, the six workshops were held during the months of April and May of this year and the participants included all Government school principals, all senior school improvement officers, the literacy and numeracy coaches, the acting director of education, acting CEO for education, the acting deputy chief officer for education, the business manager at the Department of Education Services, the behaviour support manager, the education policy team in the Ministry of Education, as well as the senior policy advisors in the Ministry of Education. Madam Speaker, it also involved the lead inspector from the Education Quality Assurance Unit in which was responsible for carrying out the baseline inspections. And finally, Madam Speaker, it also involved the participation of the TVET coordinator that I spoke to before.

So, Madam Speaker, it is important to note that through this development process, the group came up with what they thought to be the six focus areas and the nine strategies which they felt, as a result of the work that had started during this year, needed to be continued or more focus placed on in this coming up academic year. So this was certainly a collaboration process which created a plan of action from the ground up.

Madam Speaker, the six focus areas that all of these persons whom I just mentioned came up with as being the focus for the 2016/17 year, is numeracy, literacy, science, positive learning environments, (again, dealing with behaviours and issues of behaviour and support) focus on special education needs and disabilities, and TVET. And there are the nine targets that fall under those six strategies as well. So, Madam Speaker, having this type of expanded collaborative process will help to ensure that the plan which was developed from the ground up, as I said, will increase the buy-in of the school leaders.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to read a few of the feedback comments received here: "The participants felt that it was an informative and stimulating exercise and encouraged and facilitated collaboration among all educators. Participants felt that this process will help all persons develop better ownership and accountability. They felt that the efforts to standardise systems are outstanding. They felt that the process lent itself to great collaboration for ensuring cohesiveness across the system, as well as principals will now be able to encourage staff to buy-in to the overall plan of action because they were participants in that plan and the development of that plan. They felt that the action plan gives a real sense of ownership for all." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

So, Madam Speaker, again, some of the issues highlighted in the baseline inspections was the lack of consistency across the system. There were excellent practices or demonstrated excellent teaching and learning practices, excellent leadership and management practices, but a big part of the issue was a lack of consistency across the system. So by bringing all of the key players in education together to develop this concrete, measurable, specific plan of action again, that is the difference. The plan of action process that had been started from last year is not just a list of overarching goals to be achieved, but they are tied to specific, measurable, tangible, actions with clear lines of accountability. And that, Madam Speaker, was and is going to be critical for us to continue to move and to accelerate the pace of school improvement across our system.

Madam Speaker, I also spoke about the introduction of the non-teaching special education needs coordinators in this last academic year to try to deal with some of the pressing issues as it relates to services to students with special education needs. Madam Speaker, you would have remembered and you would have heard this is certainly a policy priority area of mine as Minister, and the Government certainly supports as well the need to emphasise dealing with students and giving them the best possible opportunities to succeed to their best abilities.

**The Speaker:** Minister, you have one hour remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you.

Madam Speaker, in that vein, the Government tasked not just the Ministry of Education but other ministries relevant to providing services to students who display special education needs and disabilities; namely, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Affairs and other key critical ministries that work with children in some capacity, we have charged them to come together to work from an inter-ministerial perspective. Research shows that the greatest return on investment in education, both from an economic as well as a quality of life's perspective, is by investing in early childhood education. And so, Madam Speaker, it is even more pronounced for these students who start life with these challenges.

So, Madam Speaker, during the past year the Cabinet had approved the proposal by the Ministry of Education to adopt this inter-ministerial collaborative approach for children with disabilities under compulsory school age in an attempt to directly impact access to multiple services.

Again, Madam Speaker, this work has already started and there is a new intake process which has been implemented as it relates to children accessing what is known as the Early Intervention Programme [EIP]. But also the Ministry has specifically budgeted for additional staff as it relates to the Early Intervention Programme, but also, and notably, Madam Speaker, the Government has budgeted for relocating the Early Intervention Programme which currently sits on the CIFEC campus which is a wholly inappropriate place to have a programme such as that. The decision was taken during the last Government administration to move the Early Intervention Programme from Lighthouse School to the CIFEC campus. And as you know, CIFEC deals with students who are at their last year of high school, and these are children that are not even of compulsory school age. So, Madam Speaker, I don't need to tell you some of the issues that having the mixing of ages, such as that on one campus, has brought about. So the Government recognises again, the need to address this and to address this as a matter of priority and so there is a budget allocated to moving this process forward in order to address this concern.

Madam Speaker, the new Education Law, which once adopted, will also provide a solid legislative underpinning to support a world-class education system and that includes supporting students with special education needs and disabilities as well enshrining the need to support technical and vocational education and training as I have discussed before. And so, Madam Speaker, I look forward to presenting that Bill formerly to the House, which was supposed to have been presented last time, but of course, you know, the Premier and the Minister of Financial Services had to leave to travel to attend the anti-corruption summit so, of course, then that particular Bill needed to be put off to another session. But, Madam Speaker, suffice it to say, the Government recog-

nises that in order to continue in this advancement of our education system, we need to have solid legislative underpinning to support those advancements.

Madam Speaker, there is a specific succession planning process which has launched in May of this year to address some of the concerns about the lack of progression of Caymanians in the teaching profession. And, I certainly am happy to have my Chief Officer speak more to this, if necessary, as this more falls under the domain of the Deputy Governor as it relates to civil service matters. But I just wanted to highlight that succession planning as a policy, was a key policy of the Government, and certainly I articulated in the very first Budget Debate that it was a policy that I wanted the Ministry to try to develop and advance because, again, it is about building capacity of our people.

Madam Speaker, the establishment of the office of Education Quality Assurance, we spoke about that. That is already in train. The Ministry is recruiting, as we speak, to try to build up capacity in this area because we recognise that ongoing assessments, ongoing evaluations of our system, especially coming out of what was the baseline inspections is going to be critical to make sure that we continue to track the progress that we want and we know that can be achieved. And, Madam Speaker, it was unfortunate that the office was effectively disbanded under the last administration because of lack of resources allocated to that particular unit. But, again, Madam Speaker, we are on track to try to not only create that framework for future advancement but also it will be enshrined in legislation, so it will earmark and support the work of what the office of [Education] Standards and [Assessment] will be.

Madam Speaker, speaking very briefly to the review of the governance model and we heard from a number of speakers about the need to think outside the box and get creative with trying to address some of the challenges in education as we know exists, and have existed for quite some time.

Madam Speaker, during the 2014/15 academic year the Ministry also engaged services of an external body to conduct the independent review of the Government education system and there was a report that came out of that which was tabled in this Honourable House in September of last year, I believe. And so, the work of developing a plan to implement and enhance governance model continues. The Ministry is working—and I just want to make one amendment to the Project Future that was just laid on the Table by the Premier earlier this week. The Ministry has been charged with, under the Project Future umbrella to look at finding ways to enhance a model of education to increase the participation of parents and community and otherwise, and the Ministry is already in train, as it relates to developing the outline business case, in order to provide more detailed options and ways in which we can actually implement such a structure. So,



Madam Speaker, work has begun to look at how we can strengthen the actual governance of education so we can bring in the input, the responsibility, the participation in a more healthy way of parents and communities of which these schools sit.

Again, Madam Speaker, the Education Bill contemplates and creates a legal framework for having multiple education models. It is drafted to be flexible enough to accommodate whichever model the policy direction of the Cabinet is to take. When it comes to education this Government has been and is planning for future. We are creating a legislative framework that is adaptable to the changing needs and the aspirations of society. However, Madam Speaker, whatever decision taken as a way forward must be rooted in evidence and sound educational research because education reform cannot be determined by the winds, the fancies, the desires, or the pleas of interested individuals, or the public at large, no matter how well intentioned those pleas may be. Also, Madam Speaker, the efforts to continue to reform and enhance our education systems cannot be determined by the winds or fancies or any politicians—past, present or those aspiring to gain a seat in the next general election. It must be rooted in research and evidence and then sufficient policy decisions taken as a result.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of other targeted things that are being planned for the coming year. I spoke to them in previous debates, most recently the Cadet Corps Law where I signalled to the country that there would be a community service aspect of the graduation criteria, which is coming online which will be launched in this coming academic year, 2016/17 for Year 10 students going forward.

Of course, Madam Speaker, John Gray High School is progressing. The construction documents are finalised, for the gym that is, and I am made to understand now that the prequalification of local contractors has been completed as well, and that there should be real movement on this process by the end of the month. Madam Speaker, there is also a plan to look critically at what needs to happen for our students who display some of the most critical, behavioural, social, emotional, mental health needs who are currently not being addressed suitably in the mainstream schools. Madam Speaker, this has been a challenge, as I said, that has plagued the system for many, many years. It has been an issue that the Ministry has been tasked to look at from literally day 1 since taking office. And the Ministry has done some preliminary work to come up with some alternative proposals for how we can look at providing for creating more positive school environments, generally, but also specifically looking at making better provision for those students who are in most critical need who are often causing the lion's share of whatever disruptions that are happening at the school level.

So, Madam Speaker, finding a solution to this issue, to this problem, to meet the needs of our most vulnerable students will require that we look at provision already in place. It will require that we bring together Members of the Ministry of Health, Health Services Authority, Ministry of Community Affairs, and other relevant departments who work and are charged with the responsibility of working to address issues on a social, emotional, and behavioural level. Because, Madam Speaker, the fact that these issues present themselves in schools does not mean that they emanate from schools. In many respects they are brought into the schools and the schools are where most of the students spend most of their days, but the schools need the support of these partner agencies in order to address the issues that these children display and they come to school with on a daily basis. So some of the solutions that will be explored with the relevant ministries going forward, is looking at some of the provisions in place, such as the Bonaventure facility, to see where we can better utilise these facilities to benefit our children in a more targeted, behavioural and psychosocial interventions that just cannot be accommodated in mainstream school as it stands right now.

So, Madam Speaker, this is an area I know that is going to be looked at by the Ministry of Community Affairs under looking at ways to support children and young people at risk of criminality, but certainly the Ministry of Education is prepared to do its part to try to find and implement those solutions, and we will certainly be looking to work very closely with those agencies and ask that the support is given in that regard.

Madam Speaker, before I wrap up the discussion on education and move to some of the other critical areas that fall under the Ministry, I want to turn specifically to some of the topical issues of education that we have heard over the last couple of weeks, and in particular, dealing specifically with the requests and the pleas of the parents of Savannah Primary School. Madam Speaker, I want to state right off the bat, I, too, as Minister of Education, stand with the parents of Savannah Primary School. The Government stands with the parents of Savannah Primary School as we've heard a number of speakers in the Government mention in their contributions.

Madam Speaker, I also need to make it very clear to the listening public and everybody in this room, that as Minister of Education, I also stand with the parents of Sir John A. Cumber Primary School; the largest primary school in the country with almost 100 more students enrolled at Savannah Primary School.

I also stand with the parents George Town Primary School. I stand with the parents of Red Bay Primary School, with Prospect Primary School, with Bodden Town Primary School, with Edna M. Moyle Primary School. I stand with parents of East End Pri-

mary School, with Creek and Spot Bay Primary School, with West End Primary School. I stand with the parents of Clifton Hunter High School. I stand with the parents of John Gray High School, the largest high school that is facing some of the greatest challenges in our system. I stand with the parents CIFEC students, and lastly, but certainly not least, I stand with the parents of the Lighthouse School. And, Madam Speaker, I took the time—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, I am sure you also stand with the parents of the Little Cayman Education Centre.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Absolutely! Thank you very much for that, Madam Speaker. I certainly stand with the parents of the Little Cayman Education Centre. Thank you for making sure that that does not go unrecorded.

Certainly, I stand with—and I have actually visited the Centre and was very impressed with what they do. It is very creative in how they actually deal with their unique challenges of having multiple ages in one classroom. And they turn that challenge into a great learning opportunity, Madam Speaker, which I personally believe is a great way to go in all of our schools as it relates to helping to empower the older children or the children who are more advanced in their studies to help to actually develop the skills of those students who may be needing additional assistance. So, certainly, I stand with the parents of the Little Cayman Centre.

Madam Speaker, I say that to say that as Minister of Education I represent and I advocate for all schools in our system. The Ministry and the Department of Education, Madam Speaker, is tasked with the responsibility to meet the resource and other needs of all schools on an equitable basis given the unique challenges that each of these schools present. But, Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate but it is the facts the issues highlighted by the Savannah Primary School in their petition, as important as they are, and as much as I recognise and understand their concern, those issues aren't unique to Savannah Primary School. And, in fact, 10 of the 15 schools assessed during the baseline school inspections were deemed to be unsatisfactory as it relates to overall effectiveness of the school. Madam Speaker, this is a harsh reality, which, up until this point, the country was not aware of, or Madam Speaker, I dare say not prepared to deal with in such a manner. Especially, Madam Speaker, given a recent experience during the previous Government administration where the programme of regular inspections for public schools had virtually ceased since 2007 and 2008, and the Inspections Unit went from having seven to eight staff members in 2009 to only having two staff members in 2012, effectively being disbanded during the last administration.

So, Madam Speaker, this reality, these issues affecting the schools certainly, as I said, didn't happen overnight. It certainly didn't happen within the last three years. And so, Madam Speaker, to attempt to blame, as some people have, we have heard in the media and [seen] in the print and in the blogs, attempting to blame any Government, attempting to blame this Government, attempting to blame this Minister of Education for the issues for the lack of resources in the schools as it stands today, that attempt to lay blame is not helping the situation. It is in many respects short-sighted because you are just thinking in political cycles. And it is political posturing at its best.

Madam Speaker, there has been a lot said in these Chambers during this debate, as well as in the public domain about the need for additional resources in our schools. And, I wholeheartedly agree with that view because any money spent with respect to education is an investment in our people. That is what I believe as Minister of Education. That is what I believe as an elected representative of the district of West Bay. That is I believe as a Member of this Government. And, Madam Speaker, this Government feels that way as well.

Madam Speaker, there are some specific areas in the public education system which is still in need of more resources, especially to assist to provide targeted interventions in the schools to those students most in need, as I said. There are now specific targets set for literacy, numeracy, behaviour, et cetera, and we have uncovered through these inspections, especially most recently, that there is a need for additional interventions and additional support in the schools.

Through the course of what I have said thus far, I have demonstrated how this Government has in fact been increasing resources in the education system, year over year, even in the face of austere budgets with stringent spending limits. And those limits include civil service personnel-related expenses and the hiring policy which was adopted during the last administration that limited the ability to hire the needed positions. And, Madam Speaker, a policy that has been carried forward during this administration as a result of the fact that there were specific requirements now imposed on the Government to live within under the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) as it relates to expenditure, personnel hiring, et cetera, as a means to try to cut down and control the spiralling personnel costs.

Madam Speaker, I have said it in private, I've said it to the Deputy Governor, I've said it to all and sundry and I will say it in this House—When it comes to recruiting teachers and support staff in the schools, the education system has become a victim to some degree to the austerity measures adopted in relation to limiting head count and personnel costs. But despite the fact that the Ministry and Government—I should say, despite this fact, despite the fact that we

know we have these limits of what we can do in terms of hiring personnel and we know we have limits on expenditure, the Ministry and the Government are not just throwing our hands in the air in defeat. We are not just saying, *Well, you know, this is the situation and we can do nothing about it.* Madam Speaker, there is a plan and there is a budget allocated to some degree to buy-in the needed intervention service across the schools, including Savannah Primary School, to the best extent possible.

So, Madam Speaker, if anybody thinks that as Minister of Education I do not care about trying to address the critical needs in education, they are grossly mistaken. If they think that the Government does not care, they are also mistaken. But as I said, we have our constraints, but as my colleague Minister for Bodden Town, Minister Bodden, said in his contribution, as Minister of Education I do what I can to plea and get as much resources as possible in order to service the needs of education, as every other Minister does with respect to their subject areas. But, Madam Speaker, we have a budget, we get what we get, and we are asked to make the most of that to try to address those issues.

Again, Madam Speaker, if we didn't care about addressing the needs of education . . . let's think of this from a logical perspective. We would not have called for these inspections. As Minister of Education, I would not have called for these inspections to take place. And not just not have called for them, I would not have tabled them in this Legislative Assembly, I would not have made them public; again, which is in stark contrast to what was done under the previous administration when there was the infamous behavioural report of 2012 that never saw the light of day until it came up in a debate in this House during Finance Committee of 2014. This openness, Madam Speaker, this transparency, this willingness to recognise, yes, we have made progress and we certainly have made progress, but this willingness to recognise that we need to take this progress and accelerate the pace and deal with the real critical issues if we were not prepared to deal with the realities of education, those baseline inspections would never have happened.

So, I need the parents of Savannah Primary School and every other school in this country to know and to understand that as Minister of Education I fight to try to ensure that adequate resources are made available to every school in the Government system.

Madam Speaker, so much so that the budget approach taken this year by the Ministry, having had the benefits of seeing the results of the inspections and knowing that we can and we should be striving to that centre of excellence in education and that it would require increased resources in some of these areas as it relates to interventions, I asked and I tasked the Ministry to come up with a budget based on addressing the most critical education needs. That budget

was presented, including the request for the requisite staffing levels needed throughout the schools to support the interventions. As I said, during the process, the Ministry was then allocated a budget and given permission to hire the posts that they were given permission to hire. And then, upon given the final allocation, the Ministry and the DES [Department of Education Services] were then tasked to find ways to address the needs of the system in the most efficient and effective manner.

Madam Speaker, because of some of the constraints of hiring, and as I said, the Ministry and the Government is not sitting back and just throwing our hands up in defeat, we have found and we are trying to find creative ways to address some of these needs, because if we can't hire to the civil service, we are now trying to buy-in the service. Because we know the needs are there and we know the needs need to be addressed.

So there is a plan, Madam Speaker, to try to work collaboratively, working with private sector and other entities to provide support as necessary. We have already started this on a small scale, so to speak, Madam Speaker, with the introduction of the Pastoral Support Worker [Programme] I talked about before. That is a public/private partnership providing resources in the schools now, being provided through a private entity. We tested that; it proved to be very successful. We launched it in 2014. We continued it in 2015. We plan to support it in 2016, but we plan to roll it out on a larger scale to try to address some of the critical resource gaps which we know exist. Because, Madam Speaker, it requires thinking outside the box. It requires leadership. It requires innovative solutions to address some of these needs. And that, Madam Speaker, is what the Minister, the Ministry and this Government is attempting to do in trying to provide some of these critical resource issues.

As I said, Madam Speaker, finding innovative solutions requires persons with vision at the helm of the Ministry, and indeed, it requires people with vision in Cabinet, in the Government, to help determine the policy direction for education. And, Madam Speaker, as my friend from East End said in his contribution, the fact is that, you know, the Government really shouldn't be singing its own praises (so to speak) and highlighting the contributions that the Government has made, if you were to believe that, I would then like to offer a few words which were articulated by my friend, the Fifth Elected Member for George Town, in helping to appreciate the vision which was driven and the work of the Ministry going forward. I refer, Madam Speaker, to the *Official Hansard Report* of 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2014, when the Member said (and this was when the Member sat with the Government Bench):

**“I will move on to education. I am ultimately involved in whatever we achieve or fail to do because I am the Councillor in that Ministry. The Minister has tasked me with holding the reins of**

education sometimes when she is absent. And I would like to publicly thank her for giving me that opportunity. But, again, it comes with an awesome responsibility. I, for one, didn't get into this job because I wanted to shy away from responsibility or because I wanted to be a wallflower. So, I welcome the task and have committed to her that I will carry out her vision, as well as the vision of the entire Government, including the Independents and what we campaigned on as well.

"I am not going to go into a number of the accomplishments, the journey thus far. I will leave that to the Minister of Education (the Second Elected Member for West Bay). But I would like to say that we haven't been standing idly by or twiddling our thumbs, as one of our great fans likes to say on every radio broadcast on the Island [it seems]. We have just moved into phase 2 of our approach with strict behavioural changes coming into play for September 2014, which the Minister has said will be carried out without fear or favour.

"Changes to the Education Modernisation Law will be coming into effect" and he goes to say that "setting national [education] standards for achievement, performing baseline audits of our schools, and, I think most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister's vision is to re-establish the independent inspectorate of our schools. We were very surprised and disheartened when we realised that the last full set of inspections was done sometime in 2007. How can we accurately determine where we are if we haven't done the exercise in an objective and transparent manner and then acted on the reports?"

Madam Speaker, the Member then went on to say "I think when we accomplish that (because it's not "if"), people will see what the Minister's vision is in creating education as a centre of excellence in the Cayman Islands. It is not going to happen overnight. But I dare say that we are setting the groundwork and we are going to be vigilant while we are here to ensure that education is left in a better way than when we found it." [[Official Hansard Report, 29 May 2014, pp 63-64](#)]

Madam Speaker, I couldn't say it better myself. I think what the Member has articulated is exactly what we have been doing, exactly what the Ministry of Education has been doing since day one. We set out with a plan. We have continued to execute that plan and, Madam Speaker, the results of that plan will not happen overnight. But I also at this stage, even though the Member for George Town is a newly minted Opposition Member, I want to recognise and acknowledge the contributions that he did make while he was in the Ministry of Education as Councillor.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, is this a convenient time for me to take a luncheon break?

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We will take a luncheon break and reconvene at 2:00 pm.

**Proceedings suspended at 12:33 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 2:10 pm**

#### APPROPRIATION (JULY 2016 TO DECEMBER 2017) BILL, 2016

#### DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

**The Speaker:** Proceedings are resumed.

The Honourable Minister has 20 minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Madam Speaker, thank you.

I was wrapping up the conversation about education. I just want to quickly just reiterate that, obviously, Madam Speaker, when it comes to education this coalition Government has a plan. We've had a plan since day one, and we have been working toward executing that plan, which is to establish the Cayman Islands as a centre of educational excellence and to prepare our students to take advantage of the employment and entrepreneurial opportunities that exist to excel in the local economy and compete in the global economy.

Madam Speaker, this is something that I campaigned very strongly on and which we continue as a Government to support. So, Madam Speaker, the plan includes the allocation of additional resources because, as I said, additional resources are needed within the educational system in order to continue to drive the improvements that we certainly hope to be able to speak to in short order at the end of this year, but also as we have seen, and hopefully, see going forward. But also it includes making sure that the most efficient and effective use of those resources are deployed and that is why the continued focus on professional development, continued focus on training, continued focus on increasing the level of accountability in the system is also an important strategy as well.

So, Madam Speaker, these are the goals that the Ministry, the Education Department, and the schools will continue to work for. We have been allocated a budget, Madam Speaker, and we will work to ensure that that budget is deployed in the best means possible.

Madam Speaker, I also want to recognise that in many respects because of the changes, because of the new approach, because of the reform efforts underway over the past year, that this has been chal-

lenging year for many people in the system—schools, the DES, and the Ministry have had to adapt and to embrace a new system of accountability, and in some cases, increased responsibility. So, I just really want to recognise the hard work of our teachers, principals, school leaders, and other support staff that have stepped up to the challenge of working to achieve excellence in education in our public school system. And I also want to thank them for embracing these challenges and seeing them as opportunities to grow, and for opportunities for our children to continue to blossom in their care. And that, certainly, came through very strong in the various teacher forums, which I hosted during the past three years. I have had a meeting with at least five different teacher forums where representatives from every single school were present. Plus also working very closely with the parents, Madam Speaker, having convened at least four national PTA forums where representatives from every single public school and PTAs were present.

I had an opportunity to meet and continue to work very closely with parents, Madam Speaker. That is a strategy that will continue to be used going forward. And, of course, attending various PTA sessions as I have done in the past three years as well to the John Gray High School PTA, Sir John A. Cumber Primary School PTA, Clifton Hunter PTA, just to name a few. Just to recognise, Madam Speaker, I know that the Savannah Primary School recently had a PTA meeting and I was invited to, but the fact is that the meeting was held at the same time that we were actually in the House, back in October of last year, and so I did indicate to the PTA president at the time that I would try to make it, but unfortunately, the House ran late that night, so I was not able to make it. And I did indicate to him that my attendance would have been subject to my obligations at the Legislative Assembly. So, I just wanted to say that in the event that those parents in particular may not have gotten that message. The intention was certainly to attend these meetings as I have been doing since taking office, but unfortunately the date that it was planned for coincided with my obligations here in the Legislative Assembly.

So, Madam Speaker, moving very quickly to another key area under the Ministry and that is dealing with employment. Madam Speaker, as we have heard from a number of speakers from the Government bench prior to me, we have made significant strides as it relates to addressing the issues of employment from the various ministries perspectives. The Government has increased business in private sector confidence. This has led to the increased confidence in creating jobs and we have seen this, as I said, over the past three years. The country has experienced a significant drop in unemployment. The rate of unemployment has gone to 4.2 per cent overall, and in particular, to 6.2 per cent of Caymanians. And this is the lowest that it has been since 2007. And,

Madam Speaker, it is important to reiterate that because 2007 was the economic heyday at the time, the downturn in the economy worldwide took place, later in the last quarter of that year or into 2008, so that is a good reference point. Because if we can say today that our unemployment rate is as low as it was when we were in our economic boom times, then Madam Speaker, we know we are on the right track.

Madam Speaker, in addition to all of the other ministries and the work of the ministries in the areas and the roles that each ministry has to play with respect to spurring employment, creating jobs and creating environments for jobs to flourish, one of those key agencies is the National Workforce Development Agency [NWDA]. And so really, the overarching plan as it relates to employment for the country is to provide training and vocational opportunities for all Caymanians. And to provide an economic environment that encourages entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for all Caymanians. And, Madam Speaker, that is generational as well as new Caymanians alike—young, mid-career, and older Caymanians too. So, these overarching goals has been the guiding force behind the goals, primarily from the perspective of the National Workforce Development Agency as it relates to training and vocational opportunities for Caymanians because that agency in particular, Madam Speaker, has been set up to try to be a partner and a facilitator in the training development and employment of Caymanians.

One of the key campaign promises of mine, certainly, again, making sure the country is aware of the Government carrying out its promises, was to increase resources of the NWDA so that they can adequately address the needs of the job seeking population. And this Government, since taking office, has done just that. The NWDA was created in 2012. The agency had little more than five staff. It was a bit of a shell of an organisation. But since taking office in May 2013, the Government has continued to invest in developing that agency to make it more fit for purpose and we have, in fact, tripled the staff with a current staff complement of 17 persons. And, Madam Speaker, we have two additional persons budgeted for in the coming year.

We have also restructured the agency to include the Scholarship Secretariat because, again, the issue of training and development of our people, we have taken a holistic approach of ensuring that the NWDA works very closely with the Scholarship Secretariat to make the transition from those students who may be full-time students into employment, that much more seamless. And so, Madam Speaker, the development of the NWDA has no doubt increased exponentially since we took office. And, certainly, this was another area that was a big campaign commitment of mine as the now-Minister with responsibility for this particular area.

I also, Madam Speaker, wanted to highlight some of the services. And just to give an overview of the training sessions, the Member questioned what the NWDA did with respect to moving the agency forward. So, certainly, by giving an account of the resources, but also, Madam Speaker, in this past year alone, the agency has conducted over 100 training sessions with over 900 persons attending. So, Madam Speaker, this agency is certainly trying to do its part to provide the training and vocational opportunities.

Madam Speaker, I won't speak too much about the Ready2Work programme as a number of speakers have already spoken to that point, but suffice it say, that the Ready2Work programme was launched by and through the National Workforce Development Agency, but it works very closely with the Needs Assessment Unit [NAU] in that the Deputy Director of the Needs Assessment Unit is actually a member of the project team. And so, Madam Speaker, this is an initiative that is striving to achieve the welfare to work ethos and moving our system forward again where people are no longer able to just seek handouts, especially if they are able bodied and able to work. The last confirmation that I received, there are, at least 10 participants in the Ready2Work programme that are NAU clients. So, again, Madam Speaker, the Government is delivering on the mandate to move us towards developing and adopting a welfare-to-work philosophy.

Madam Speaker, I will speak to another area which there seems to have been some questions raised in various debates, but also an area that I am very proud to say that the NWDA has moved diligently to try to achieve, and that is the development and the launching of a number of apprenticeship programmes and internship programmes, where we actually couple the training with job experience to try to lessen those barriers of people accessing employment.

So, certainly, Madam Speaker, in the last year the NWDA has launched in collaboration with Tweed Construction Company a marble technician apprenticeship programme. Madam Speaker, this is a very specialised programme that is requiring, I believe, three years of work, but also certification is given under the industry certified master tilers category and the certification is provided by the Tile Council of North America [TCNA]. Again, Madam Speaker, there is a young man who is participant in the programme now, his name is Keiron Watler, he is a young Caymanian. He was offered a three-year apprenticeship tiling which began in April of this year and, again, in keeping with the philosophy of trying to promote and develop training programmes that are not just local, but have international accreditation and they will learn skills that are transferrable to any company as long as they have the relevant experience and exposure and the job requires those skill sets.

So, again, the apprenticeship programme that was launched recently with the collaboration of a local

construction company is that of the master industry certified master tiler. And, of course, that individual will have the ability to work in that industry in whatever capacity once they are qualified. So these are the kinds of strategies, Madam Speaker, of looking to actually get that sort of apprenticeship but not just apprenticeship that doesn't actually translate into jobs.

Madam Speaker, some of the key initiatives that are going to be rolled out in the coming year, in 2015/16, there are two apprenticeships which are in train to be rolled out and that specifically is in the food and beverage industry.

We have an apprenticeship programme which is just being finalised with a company that will be offering bartending certification through, again, an accredited institution that allows them to then be considered in that field. We know, Madam Speaker, we have over 150, I believe, permits out for bartenders, so certainly this is an area where we know there is a need to have local people trained up. And this programme will cater to, I think, upward of 15 participants in the first cohort. This is a very exciting programme and we will have more information once the ink is dried, so to speak.

Also, Madam Speaker, we are looking to launch in the coming year an apprenticeship programme in the health sector, looking at creating kind of specialty health administrators. Again, Madam Speaker, we know that the health services industry is a growing industry and therefore with Health City we are looking to work toward launching an apprenticeship programme for persons to be able to really take advantage of those opportunities as well.

So, Madam Speaker, the areas of employment continues to be a priority for the Government. The issue as it relates to the NWDA as a clearinghouse is something that I am very passionate about and something that I have been working toward trying to achieve, again, since day one. And it is something that the National Workforce Development Agency has also worked diligently in trying to move forward.

Madam Speaker, we have moved from a system where we first took office where everything was manual and very cumbersome to a system that is completely online and can be accessed at your fingertips. They launched the interface with Immigration, which is a key component to trying to improve the transparency and to improve the application process as it relates to work permits. So the Immigration Department now has the information to hand to be able to make the necessary decisions as it relates to approving or not approving a work permit.

Again, Madam Speaker, tying this specifically to a campaign promise, to create a transparent, work application system by improving the existing NWDA database to include all job vacancies, job seekers, and social welfare recipients who are able to work. This will foster better collaboration between the Immigration Department, NWDA, and DCFS [Department of Children and Family Services], or in this case, NAU.

So, Madam Speaker, this, again, was the clear plan which, coming into office we were working toward executing. At this stage, the outlined business case has been submitted by the NWDA or by the Ministry, as it relates to the national clearinghouse, the project's steering committee is working now with the Ministry of Home Affairs and Immigration Department in order to finalise this business case for approval by Cabinet. So, Madam Speaker, the collaboration and cooperation that is absolutely critical to move this process forward between the Ministry of Employment and Ministry of Home Affairs, [and] Immigration Department, is going to be vital to the success of this project. So, Madam Speaker, as I spoke about in my last Budget Debate, it was hoped that this would be taken forward as a e-Government initiative, under the e-Government umbrella, but the challenges obviously that ensued in that regard, I don't need to go into details at this moment, but nonetheless, the NWDA is moving very swiftly to try to do its part in creating this clearinghouse.

Madam Speaker, as it relates to labour and pensions, as I've said in my opening, there are some key fundamental deliverables that the Department of Labour and Pensions have been successful in bringing forward in the last three years. Again, as it relates to increasing the resources and investing in the department, the department has had continued investment in building up capacity. There is about 10 additional staff that have been allocated to the department since we took office in May 2013, and that is because we realised that the responsibilities and the growing responsibilities with the advent of the minimum wage and the amendment to the various pieces of legislation—the pension one being most recently adopted—required that the department got the additional resources to carry out its mandate. And the Government recognises that, the Government has acted, and we have budgeted and provided those resources.

Madam Speaker, I want to inform this House, and if I am able to do so, I can do so in a more fulsome statement at a later date, but as a result of the work that has been undertaken by the Department of Labour and Pensions in the past three years, the restructuring of the department, the focus of the work—dealing with the backlog—as well as the recent passing of the National Pensions Law and the changes that that will bring, the Department of Labour and Pensions has recently received confirmation from the Office of the Complaints Commissioner (OCC) that both of the old motion investigations, one relating to occupational safety and health at the workplace, and the other one related to pensions. Both of these investigations are now closed, Madam Speaker, and that the recommendations as set out by the Office of the Complaints Commissioner are substantially being complied with. And so, Madam Speaker, this is a great achievement and accomplishment of the department, given that these things have been hanging

as a cloud over the work of the department, for a number of years. These investigations, both of which took place during the last administration and now, Madam Speaker, we are happy to say that we have been able to deal with these and now the Office of the Complaints Commissioner has pretty much signed off on the work that the department has done in this regard.

So, I want to congratulate the work of the department and to, as I said, continue to give and pledge the support of the Government to the work of the department in this regard.

Madam Speaker, moving forward, as I said, certainly, there is no shortage of controversy and no shortage of issues that the Ministry of Education, Employment, and Gender Affairs have had to deal with and have actually tackled head-on. One of them, as I said, has to do with continuing to strengthen the pension legislation. We passed and it was unanimously passed in this House, Madam Speaker, of those who were in the House to vote, including Members of the Opposition who spoke during that particular debate, and, of course, including the Leader of the Opposition who actually spoke in favour of the debate, although he was not there for the actual vote at the time. Those changes will bring about significant amendments that are needed to strengthen the pension regime. But, Madam Speaker, they are a significant first step in what has taken 20 years to achieve. The Ministry will continue to work on looking at strengthening the regime and, in particular, dealing with the regulations to support the Pensions Law that also is out of date. And, in particular, the looking at the Schedule for the financial retirement benefit and the drawdown amounts. We know, we hear the challenges of people living on \$1,000 a month as pensions, but Madam Speaker, this is an area that the Ministry will be looking to tackle in the coming year as well to try and get some actuarial advice and support as to how that particular Schedule can and should be amended for persons going forward.

Madam Speaker, as I indicated previously, another key accomplishment of the Ministry has been the extension of CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women]. That is something that the Government has been working on, certainly, since we took office, but certainly successive governments or previous governments have been working on this for at least the past 14 years. But, of course, then the work in earnest started before that from the passing, I think, of the motion back in 1995 to have an office of Women's Affairs. So, Madam Speaker, the progress has certainly continued under this Coalition Government. And I am happy to be the Minister responsible for Gender Affairs, to be the one to have participated on behalf of the Government at the depositing of the instrument at the United Nations earlier this year in March.



Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few moments to deal with some of the issues as it relates to my constituency in West Bay.

**The Speaker:** Member, you have six minutes remaining.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

My constituents in West Bay will know, and if they don't know they will certainly by now after I finish speaking, that every Wednesday, unless I'm in the Legislative Assembly or I'm off-Island, I can be found at my constituency office for my weekly constituency clinics. Madam Speaker, as a Member of the Government, and in particular as a Member of Cabinet, at the request of the people of West Bay (I should add) it is always a challenge to be able to be in the districts, you know, boots on ground as you would be if you weren't a Member of Cabinet. Obviously, Madam Speaker, the responsibilities that fall in the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs has been quite great and certainly has required a substantial amount of my time as it relates to being in the office at the Government Administration Building and working toward achieving the goals at a national level. But certainly, Madam Speaker, I continue to be available to constituents on a weekly basis. And, Madam Speaker, last year, having facilitated a number of free financial planning workshops through the auspices of my West Bay office, I will look to continue to see how we can facilitate that going forward as well. Because they were well attended, Madam Speaker, and the persons in the community felt that it was very beneficial for them to be able to have this kind of information and access. So I will be reaching out to the facilitator who facilitated those previous workshops to see what can be done moving forward.

Madam Speaker, there are some key concerns that the district has as it relates to cemetery space. We know that people... the one sure this is that we all have to go at some point, and it seems like there might be a bit of acceleration in pace in some regards as the number of persons that seem to be passing, seems to be increasing. So, Madam Speaker, with that concern, I know the Minister of Planning has been working very diligently to try to see what can be done to accommodate and to find suitable land and to create a suitable solution to an ever-increasing problem in the district of West Bay, which is the growing shortage of cemetery space. So, I certainly would invite the Minister of Planning to speak to that if he is able to do so during his contribution. But it is something that the Government is aware of, it is something that we are working on, and it is something that I will continue to be advocating on behalf the people of West Bay.

As it relates to the situation of arts and crafts and the selling of kind of a craft market in the district of West Bay, Madam Speaker, again, I know that

there is some discussions, the Ministry of Tourism is looking at how we can actually create an experience with visitors and create an environment where we can house a craft market to some degree in the West Bay area where it is convenient for the route, you know, heading to Turtle Farm and everything. And in that vein, Madam Speaker, the Minister of Planning and NRA [National Roads Authority] are also working on trying to align or realign the North West Point Road in order to facilitate the development of such a market. Again, I know and have seen the correspondence and I have been actively encouraging that project to take place as quickly as possible. So, this will hopefully be something that we will be able to deliver on during the next coming year, and I know, as I said, the Minister and Ministry of Planning and the NRA are already working toward trying to achieve that goal. But, again, as the representative for West Bay, this is one of the things that I have been working on behind the scenes with the relevant ministries to try to effect.

Madam Speaker, another key thing which has been needed for a very long time is that the town hall field, what we know as the town hall field, which is the Sir John A. Cumber Primary [School] Field, which is used by the community. Almost every time you drive past that field it is being used, either by school children themselves or by community members in the evening. There are no bathroom facilities there, Madam Speaker, and it is quite a challenge when games are held there, when practice is held there, and so as the Minister of Sports said in his contribution, it is certainly something that I will continue to work and advocate that that be dealt with during this upcoming term as he looks to work with the Ministry to develop these school facilities in making them more fit for purpose for the actual community at large.

So, Madam Speaker, in the interest of time, I certainly will wrap up. I mean, there is so much more that I could say about what is happening under the Ministry. There are issues related to Sunrise Centre, great things happening there; libraries, great things happening there; and a number of areas. So, hopefully, I will be in a position to make some statements on that in the near future.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would like to say that the Government, and this Coalition Government... because even though we are a coalition of one, as I said in my contributions to this honourable House when I first was sworn in, or took up my position as a Minister in Cabinet, I am prepared to stand alone if necessary to represent the people that elected me, that asked me to take up this role, and I will do so as a Member, as a Member of Cabinet, to carry out the mandate and the wishes of the people who put me here, Madam Speaker. And so, certainly, Madam Speaker, this Coalition Government, we have delivered on our promise as it relates to education thus far. But, Madam Speaker, we know and we recognise, and I am speaking in particular to education, but this



holds true of all of the subject matters, we know that education, we know that issues as it relates to training and development and technical and vocational education doesn't work in four-year political cycles. We have acted responsibly, and we have acted proactively to address some of the pressing concerns facing the education system. Madam Speaker, the greatest way to prepare our children, our people for future prosperity and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities is by investing in education. And so, Madam Speaker, we have continued to place emphasis, and certainly as Minister of Education I have continued to advocate that the Government place emphasis on the education system. But, Madam Speaker, there is still much work to be done. That is why it is important that the public continues to put their faith and trust in elected representatives who have demonstrated that they can and they have delivered on the promises.

Madam Speaker, we need to look to ensure that you elect people who have demonstrated that they are committed to rolling up their sleeves and working on finding and implementing these solutions, no matter how tough it may get, as opposed to just talking about what should or could be done.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, can you begin to wind up as I've already exercised some discretion.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I am just winding up if you can allow me two more minutes and I will be done. Thank you.

Because, Madam Speaker, I just want to reiterate the fact that when the going gets tough, that is not the time to quit. Madam Speaker, leaders don't quit. Madam Speaker, we don't let the fear of failure at the polls or otherwise, prevent us from doing what needs to be done in the best interest of the people of this country. And now, Madam Speaker, I'm not saying that to say to any individual. I am speaking to the fact that on many occasions people have asked me as an independent Member of the Government, not understanding that, you know, I am an independent Member of the Government, yes, but I am a Member of Cabinet, and the responsibility that comes with being a Member of Cabinet is great. And as the elected representative for the district of West Bay who was sent to be a representative in Cabinet, who was first asked to be, and then sent to be, by my people on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, when they resoundingly asked me to take up this position, I am here to say to them, I am adhering to your request to be a leader in this country and when things get tough and they have been on many occasions, leaders don't quit. And so, Madam Speaker, as a representative of the district of West Bay, I am committed to working for the betterment of the district, but also the betterment of the country as a whole, as I have been asked to do since taking office.

Madam Speaker, we don't fear criticism or we don't allow criticism from preventing us taking deci-

sions that are necessary, that are fair, that are just, and that are right for the country. Madam Speaker, leaders put the country first, even in the face of opposition and even in the face of criticism. Madam Speaker, we make decisions not simply with a view of the next elections, because it is easy to do that. Leaders make decisions based on the next generation. So, with that, Madam Speaker, I say thank you.

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak? Does any other Member wish to speak? Final call—does any other Member wish to speak?

The Fourth Elected Member for the District of West Bay.

*[Pause]*

**Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks, Fourth Elected Member for West Bay:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I too would like to make a short contribution to the 2015 Throne Speech delivered by Her Excellency the Governor, Ms. Helen Kilpatrick, CB, and the Budget Address 2016/17 delivered by the Honourable Marco S. Archer, JP, MLA, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 2016. Madam Speaker, I too would like to congratulate the Honourable Minister for bringing this budget which brings the Cayman Islands into full compliance with the FFR [Framework for Fiscal Responsibility], and PMFL [Public Management and Finance Law]. This achievement, Madam Speaker, is quite commendable and that is why I am publically congratulating the Honourable Minister of Finance and his team.

Madam Speaker, I note in the Budget Address, the economic stimulus measures that have been taken: reduced import duty on diesel fuel use by CUC; reduced import duty for licensed traders; reduced import on building materials; reduced trade and business licensing fees for new licences; and continuation of the current incentives for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Yet, Madam Speaker, the cost of living keeps getting higher and higher and higher. My point is that these savings are not being passed down to the consumer. The little guy on the street is having a very difficult time trying to make mortgage payments, keep his children in school, and keep food on the table. Madam Speaker, unless these savings are passed on to the consumer, these measures mean absolutely nothing to the little guy on the street.

I also note in the Budget Address that an additional \$2.1 million has been allocated for the care of the indigent, elderly, and disabled persons. Madam Speaker, because of the number of requests from these persons, I would like to see this amount increased significantly. There are many, many of our people who fall in this category, who need and deserve this help. And we should not turn a blind eye to these needs, Madam Speaker. These are our people

who help build this beautiful country we call home. And, Madam Speaker, we must help these people. Employment—Madam Speaker, the amount of Caymanians who are being pushed out of their jobs and those who are unable to find employment seem to be on the increase. This is one of the reasons for so many requests for financial assistance. Most Caymanians don't want a handout, Madam Speaker. They just want a fair opportunity to earn an honest living, but day after day, the Caymanian is being passed over for an expat in the Caymanian workforce. This injustice, Madam Speaker, this injustice must be corrected if we want to see a reduction in the crime, and see fewer and fewer requests for financial assistance.

Mental health—Madam Speaker, I am happy to see that there has been a \$2.5 million allocated for the mental health treatment facility. This facility has been talked about ever since I became a Member of this Honourable House in 2000. And I am sure it has been talked about long before that. This facility should be a moderate priority for this Government and for the Government after the next election. This facility is badly needed for our mentally ill, Madam Speaker. The mentally ill in our community are being sent overseas where family members seldom see or hear from them or about them. This is not the answer, Madam Speaker. They need to be right here where family members can help care for them. Just being able to visit them daily would be the best therapy they could receive.

The retirement age—Madam Speaker, increasing the retirement age from 60 to 65 years is very much appreciated in our workforce. There are many in the private sector and the civil service who have reached the age of 60 years who are quite willing and able to work and who need to work to make ends meet. This increase, Madam Speaker, would be like a breath of fresh air for hundreds in our civil service and private sector.

Operating surplus—Madam Speaker, what I can say is that in 2009 we found a deficit. We turned it around to a surplus, just as we did in 2005. The leader of our party was the leader both of those times. The financial industry was well protected each time we were in office and over the years it has grown. Our tourism industry was failing in 2005 as it was in 2009, and by 2012 it was recording good growth across our Islands as never before. Madam Speaker, these Islands in 2012 were well protected and poised for growth for the next years, as it has.

Madam Speaker, while the good ship Cayman never has a big financial surplus, it also has a bigger social deficit, a huge social deficit. There is a huge imbalance here and the good ship, Cayman, is listing very heavily toward the social deficit and is heading for the reef and unable to steer it.

I am urging the Honourable Minister for Finance, a gentleman for whom I have the greatest respect, to allocate more funds to the needy, indigent,

and destitute members of our community, make them proud to be Caymanians. Allocate more funds to the needs of the mentally ill patients in our society. And last, but no means least, allocate more funds to educate our children and our young people.

Madam Speaker, I am convinced that a lot of the break-ins and robberies that we are experiencing are done by desperate people who have not been able to find work after months and months of trying to find work. We have to find the balance, Madam Speaker, for the good ship Cayman, with a big financial surplus, and a big social surplus. If we fail to find that balance, Madam Speaker, the good ship Cayman is headed for disaster.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Planning.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I think just about everyone who I have listened to speak on Her Excellency's Throne Speech, the Honourable Premier's delivery, and the Budget Address by the Honourable Minister of Finance, have given thanks to all three, so I too will do so. But every one of us, and I am sure I am going to find myself in the same shoe, is finding that for this contribution two hours was not enough, or is not enough, or will not be enough. Nevertheless, here we go.

Madam Speaker, before I give some highlight reporting on the subjects in my Ministry and a progress report, so to speak, I just want to make a couple of general comments as I listened to all of those across the floor from us, making their contributions. And before I speak to that, Madam Speaker, let me say that I have been there on more than one occasion, I have played that role, and I understand it well. I even dare say being in that position today, I very likely would have taken very similar positions, that I have heard taken with those speakers.

But, Madam Speaker, let us in context have a clear understanding as to what was and what presently obtains. When this Government took office in late May 2013, Madam Speaker, the easiest way for me to describe it without going into a multitude of details is if we take a home. When we took office, the roof was leaking. There was much repair to be done. The choice was at that time, whether to spend the very, very limited resources in making sure that the kids had nice, nice clothes and shoes and everything else to go to Sunday School in, and to come home to whenever it rained, the roof leaked and they couldn't sleep comfortably in the bed, or whether to fix the roof first. I think anyone of us if we look at it in that context,

understanding that we couldn't accomplish both at the same time, try to create a balance, but get the roof and the repairs done as quickly as possible. Because there is no sense dressing them up nicely to go to Sunday School and in short order they don't have a roof over their heads.

That is the context in which I would put it, Madam Speaker. So, every one of us will cry for the roof to be fixed and for the necessary clothes and shoes to be bought, that they are presentable as everybody else, but we have to manage it in such a way that we accomplish both but understand that we have to deal with it based on the resources in order of priority.

Madam Speaker, to let it be clearly understood still, when we took office in 2013, by edict we were told that the 2013/14 Budget that we had to prepare, including the temporary budget which was done for the first three months, by year end of the 2013/14 Budget, we were to spend some \$18 million less than what was spent the year before. Then at the end of that budget, we had to tell the civil servants, once again, that while your operational budget was cut, for the first year since the Government has taken office, what that figure that it was cut to then, for the next budget it must be cut again. And that was by another \$14 [million] or \$15 million. So, without any exaggeration, at the end of the second year of our tenure, we had to do with \$30 million less than when we started.

Madam Speaker, that was in response to a four-year plan which was given to the UK that by the fourth year the country would have satisfied FFR [Framework for Fiscal Responsibility] requirements and also the requirements of the Public Management and Finance Law (PMFL). So, it meant that we had to get to the point of having 90 days of funding which it would take to operate the country, to have that put aside; it meant that our debt service ratio was to be less than 10 per cent—or let me put it the right way—no more than 10 per cent. And it also meant, the third one, which is the one that I consider to be the least in line of importance of the three was to be met. This budget meets all of those, but Madam Speaker, I say all of that to say that the reason why we could do that is because sacrifices had to be made.

Madam Speaker, and not only—and I am not trying to take away the wind-up of the Minister of Finance, but I listened to everyone speak, and I understand all that they are saying, and I understand what people are thinking also, but I wanted to put it into perspective in my lay-way (if I may say it like that), because people really need to understand. The Government is not seeking sympathy. The Government has embarked on a plan and we are following through with that plan. But in order to get where we need to get, there are certain other things which are impossible to achieve at the same time.

Madam Speaker, one of my most often said prayers since we took office was, *Please to let this*

*country get back to the point where we didn't have to ask the UK permission to bring a budget down to this Legislative Assembly, whoever the Government is.* It doesn't matter about the Government or whose side who is on. This is country we are talking now. And we are at that point.

I repeat once more, it took a lot of sacrifice to get there. And, Madam Speaker, the final portion of that slight explanation is this: Even now, when, once we continue to meet our obligations, we won't have to send our budgets to the UK. We had to send this one, and in sending this one, the operational expenditure could only be a certain amount. The capital expenditure could only be a certain amount. If we could have poured the resources into everywhere that everyone has pointed out, we would have done that. Because, Madam Speaker, all we have to do is pause and think. We are on the brink of the next election cycle. This is the incumbent Government. The things which are obvious that we would have liked to have done during this year, so that everybody would be happy with this Government come the election time, all people have to do is to stop for two minutes and think, *We would be damn fools not to do it!* That is not a curse word, Madam Speaker. That was an adjective describing the kind of fools we would be.

[Laughter]

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** That is all it was. It wasn't meant in the way that somebody would be cursing.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** No, no, I didn't mean it like that. Not for a second.

However, the point that I wish to make about that is, Madam Speaker, because there are specific restrictions in how much the operational budget can be, you then simply divide it up the best way you know how so that none of the services that you are providing will be total failures. But what we could not do is to prop up several of all of those many services that the Government provides and make them look great. And then you have as many or more that the whole world has crumbled around. We can't do that. And I know that those on the other side well understand that we can't do that. So, while as a Minister of Education spoke about everybody vying for the various subjects they have, we do that. But we also sit and recognise where the biggest needs are and try to allocate in the best proportions we can.

So, Madam Speaker, in trying to give the best perspective, as I understand it, I would ask Members to appreciate that, as I am not asking them to change their tune. But just understand and appreciate that. And this is more so for the public than Members, because I know because of the election year, Members are going to continually repeat what they have said

before and perhaps more vociferously. But I want the public to understand because the public has seen this cycle many times over. I have been here quite long enough; this is my 24<sup>th</sup> so I know how it goes too. And, Madam Speaker, having said all of that, the summary that I would give is that with all the restrictions that we have had to deal with, I think, that the Government has performed admirably. That is my personal view. And they can exclude me out of that, I don't care. I speak to the Government.

Madam Speaker, I want to quickly move along to see how many of the subjects that I have that I can report on. So, I want to start with the Department of Vehicles and Drivers' Licensing (DVDL). I am happy to report, Madam Speaker, that the new satellite licensing office in the Bodden Town district, situated out in Breakers, will be open next month. At present, the fit-out is being prepared and the necessary equipment to set the office up is being dealt with in collaboration with the Department of Computer Services and the Public Works Department. So, Madam Speaker, as I have said on more than occasion, I think that this is very good. Not just for the district, but for the overall picture and it certainly will bring a better balance, in my view, to the operations of the main office. This new facility will operate on the same schedule as the one in West Bay operates now, which is from Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm and on Saturdays, 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Certainly, these extended hours will give people better opportunity and those who live up that way will not have to cram the Crewe Road main depot during lunch time, during the week, trying to get their vehicles licensed and they can plan life a little bit better.

Madam Speaker, it is also going to be a huge change in the way all of the heavy equipment is being inspected and licensed because the extended bay that exists up there, which is extended beyond the length of the one at Crewe Road, will be able to accommodate these vehicles and the vast majority of them are located in that area anyhow. So it means positive things for that whole sector plus for the eastern districts, and I look forward.

Madam Speaker, just quickly to say—the West Bay satellite office is bursting at the seams presently, my understanding. I have gone there on a couple of occasions and many times on a Saturday they have had to turn people back, as I understand it. So, what we have to do now is that we will look at it for about three months, give it about three months to see how with all three in full operation what it does for each one. And if there needs to be additional facilities created in West Bay, we will do so. But what I don't want to do is to presume that. And when we open up in Breakers, it gives West Bay relief. Because I am sure, especially on a Saturday, many of the people who go to West Bay are not actually from the district. So, we will see how it works and we will know after

that exactly whether we need to enhance those facilities or not.

Madam Speaker, I want to just quickly speak also, staying on the same subject, about the electronic vehicle registration system that we are in the process of installing. Madam Speaker, there are those who are not so sure about how well the system will work or what it will do, but all the technocrats and all of the advice that we've had, and the department itself, is very enthusiastic about putting this system in place.

I'm not going to spend a lot of time on all of the details, Madam Speaker. Let me just say this. This system is going to allow the department to create their own licence plates and their own windshield disks. They will be a lot safer, can't tamper with them, if you try to take it off of the existing windshield to put it on another one, it is spoiled immediately. So, the safety features are much more than what exists now. The licence plates themselves are also tamper-proof, and how those plates will be installed, you cannot take those plates from where they are installed to put them on another car, like some people do now, and create all kind of havoc; it won't happen. They are much longer lasting than what we have now, and Madam Speaker, it is called electronic—and I am a very lay person when it comes to those things—but it is called electronic because there will be monitors placed throughout the country once the system is up and running. The system allows for every vehicle that crosses through where those monitors are located to be able to be tracked. We are working with the RCIPS [Royal Cayman Islands Police Service] and—

**An Hon. Member:** They need help.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes, I know they need help.

The fact of the matter is, once the system is up and running, as I understand it, it means many less times the RCIPS having to chase down a vehicle because it can't hide—set the system up; track the speed it was going; send the tickets out automatically; if they don't pay the fine, grab them—that is the quickest way for me to explain it. I am a little bit oversimplifying it, but I think that once it gets going, it is going to be a good system. And, Madam Speaker, just the additional revenue alone from the ticketing makes a whole difference. And this not about, like how some people on the other side compare work permits and say, *The Government needs to continue the work permits to get the revenue*. That is not the point. But the point about that is that as a matter of traffic calming and preventing people from speeding, and creating danger on the road, if the whole country knows that this is how this thing works, they are going to be a lot more conscious and not figure, *Well, the police now at this time of night, or this time of day. . .* because these things can just pick them up. So, Madam Speaker, that hopefully in the upcoming months will be up and running and the enforcement ability of the

Royal Cayman Islands Police Service will certainly be enhanced tremendously.

Madam Speaker, the next subject area that I want to quickly speak about is DVES, the Department of Vehicle and Equipment Services. Presently DVES is in collaboration with the Ministry and Ministry staff, completing the development of an RFP [Request for Proposal] to send out for fuel supply. The contract that was there for many, many years, Madam Speaker, you will know, expired in 2011 (I think). So, the entity that had that contract, which was Rubis, are now supplying on a month-to-month basis without firm contractual arrangements. The problem is, Madam Speaker, that the equipment that is there now and the tanks that are in the ground, when we had the experts look at it, those need to be replaced because they are getting to the point where it is going to be dangerous and we don't want any underground spills or anything like that, so that is part of the whole operation that has to be dealt with. So, we will decide whether the Government is going to install all of this new equipment, including the tanks, or whether the contract will include the supply and installation of the tanks.

Let me say this, Madam Speaker, that original contract, because it included the supply and installation of tanks and equipment, was a 15-year contract, and I have taken the position, and my colleagues agree with me, that it is not in the best interest of the Government at any point in time to do a contract that extends over that period of time. So the maximum period of time will be five years. And it is open for all qualified entities to bid when it goes out. We shall see what the bids are. We shall see how beneficial it is to the Government and the Government will then decide how to handle it. But at no point in time will there be a situation existing again, under my watch, which existed from many, many years ago. So they are doing that.

Madam Speaker, they have also upgraded the fuel management equipment. And let me quickly say, to most of us in here when we use the word or the term "GasBoy" we think back because of the past experiences. "GasBoy" is a brand name. When I heard it first, I said, *Oh, no. I don't want to hear anything about that.* But the fact of the matter is that GasBoy is a brand name and the department which is now headed by Mr. Richard Simms, who I dare say is doing a great job, even greater compared to what we had. But anyway, between him and his—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Sorry?

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** Greater than what we had?

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes.

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** Wasn't hard to do that then.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I know that.

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** If that's all you can claim it is not hard to do that.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I said he is doing a great job, but greater yet when we compare it to what we had. I put it in perspective, sir.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

So, in speaking to that, the new system that is in place now has all the necessary controls to ensure that the pilferage and other things that used to occur can't happen anymore, dealt with the right way.

The system itself also can allow for additional features which, as resources become available, the department intends to increase the features of the system that is there now where there will be—I call it an "instrument"—which can be placed on each gas tank. That makes the whole thing almost totally fool-proof. Right now you can track the vehicles when they get the supply, how much supply they are getting, [and] you can decide how often any one vehicle can get supply, so it is a whole different world. What it does, it doesn't give those who would try to figure out some way to beat the system the opportunity to do so, because, most of it is taken care of, most of it is thought through already. *This is what they might want to do [and] this is what they might want to do, so here is how we prevent that from happening.* So it is good that that is in place, Madam Speaker.

Also, the Cabinet agreed on a new vehicle procurement policy. And, Madam Speaker, that is because first of all, they wanted to standardise equipment, vehicles that is, so that your replacement parts didn't have to be such a huge inventory. Same thing like with the planes, better to have all of them the same type so that your inventory matches, rather than having to get different things for all different types of vehicles. And, Madam Speaker, the policy speaks to seven years being the length of time, the period when vehicles should be kept after which they should be sold off and replaced because studies have shown that anything beyond that, it becomes uneconomical to continue the operation.

The First Elected Member for Bodden Town, the Honourable Deputy Speaker, will remember the many years in times gone by when we have spoken about that because of how much it was costing for maintenance and all those types of things. They have already embarked on this. It increases, or should I say, it optimises the purchasing power. And it is not just one type of vehicle that is bought; it just depends on whether you need a truck just for transport or whatever else. Without going in to all of the specific

details, Madam Speaker, already it is showing that there are noticeable savings in the cost of procurement of these vehicles and in the cost of maintenance. Also, Madam Speaker, right now it is beginning to show in the volume of fuel being used is getting less because of the vehicles being more efficient. So, when you add all of the savings up, we are miles ahead of the game, rather than just any ad hoc way of dealing with it.

Madam Speaker, the other thing is that all the vehicles that are now being bought by DVES for the various Government departments and agencies, ministries, portfolios, and whatever else, part of the procurement process is for four years, free maintenance. That means the first four years of the vehicles life, the supplier of the vehicle is responsible for the maintenance of the vehicle which means less cost, again, to the operations of DVES, and DVES can now continue to concentrate on all of the heavy equipment and the other stuff that they should really be dealing with. Not that they don't deal with vehicles at all, but certainly the queue is a lot less and you don't get vehicles being there two months before they are handed back over, fixed, and all that kind of stuff, so there is new life, new spirit, new everything else, up at that department. And I certainly want to thank the director and his deputy and the entire team, including those who fix the vehicles, for all of the work that they do.

Madam Speaker, the ERA, which is the Electricity Regulatory Authority, is continuing in its role as regulator, and also the Members of this Honourable House will remember that the National Energy Policy Review Committee was recently being set up. It is my understanding, as the Fifth Elected Member for George Town is a Member of the committee, in discussing the matter with him, I understand that they have already had their first meeting and they know where they are going and the timeframe that they have by which time they have to make a report and recommendation on what the new policy should be, should be able to be met. So, I think we are okay with that.

Madam Speaker, we will also know that recently the five megawatt solar farm was commissioned and certainly that will be the first one in the country and that, in my view, a major step towards going green, renewable energy, rather than total dependence on fossil fuel supply for firm power.

Madam Speaker, the Electricity Regulatory Authority has also been working with CUC [Caribbean Utilities Company] and they have recently expanded the core programme to a maximum of six megawatts and also a new feed-in tariff rates have been designed to make the programme more available to all customers while providing incentives toward designing and building more efficient renewable energy systems.

[Pause]

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, I am trying to pick out from a whole pile of things. That's all. Forgive me.

Suffice it to say, with the limited time that I have that I think that as soon as we can get the report from the National Energy Policy Review Committee, and we have every intention of making it into legislation, then we will have a better road map.

The other one thing I want to report on that end, Madam Speaker, is that the CWI, the Carbon War Room Initiative, the Ten Island Challenge, that I made mention of, that we had met with them. They had come to the Island to the CARILEC [Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation] Conference and we had met with the recently and they promised they would get back to us. Actually, we have gotten a response very recently from them, and the Fifth Elected Member for George Town will be very interested in this. They have actually made a proposal to us that while they are charged with responsibility for dealing mostly with sovereign nations, the fact that we reached out to them and we have been able to talk, they are quite willing to collaborate and to work along with the ERA here, not only in Grand Cayman, but also they are making proposals to us, over a three-year period, to develop certain initiatives; Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, especially, being developed as signature island examples for going green. I want to say that the Minister for Tourism, the Deputy Premier, and who is also, along with your good self, Madam Speaker, one of the representatives for the sister Islands, is keen on this project. And, certainly, we look forward to working along with these people and seeing good things happen.

Madam Speaker, the Water Authority is continuing on, on its merry way, while it is not all the time that the way is merry. But it is certainly doing its job. It is one of those SAGCs, one of those Government entities that have been able to keep the price of one of the most necessary commodities for the consumer very reasonable at all times. In fact, even though their licence allows them to have increased rates two or three times over the past couple of years, the board of directors, quite sensibly, decided not to increase the rates and I am grateful to them for that, so we never had any reasons to get into any fights—because it would have been. But they are a very reasonable and sound board, and they make sound decisions.

Madam Speaker, the Water Authority is doing a fair amount of work in Cayman Brac. What we need to appreciate about the Water Authority, it is extending the water supply as we go along and it is going to create a new RO [reverse osmosis] plant, an a reservoir on the bluff, in order to increase the supply over in the Brac.

One of the things we ought to appreciate about the Water Authority is the fact that they are not able to borrow any more funds. All of the work that they have been doing recently, and they have done a

fair amount of work in Grand Cayman also, they are funding that from their own resources as they earn. So their business plan is a sound business plan.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, let me take a minute out of the little bit of time that I got on behalf of your good self and the Minister of Tourism to thank the Member from East End, who was the former Minister, for the initiative of taking piped water to the Brac.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, you see, the RO plant and the reservoir that is being built now would not have been possible had he not sorted out the situation with the land. So, the genesis of it was the acquisition of the land for the Water Authority. But there we go!

Madam Speaker, the planned works for the Water Authority for 2016/17 is the Lower Valley Water Works have been finished. The Red Gate Water Works Construction has been commenced of a new main pumping station to replace the existing one, which unfortunately no longer meets the requirements of the Authority's public water distribution system.

Madam Speaker, the one thing I want to say, and I may be going out on a limb here, but so be it sometimes. Again, this is my personal view. My personal view is that sewage is something that the Government must put as a priority. We have very limited sewage in the district of George Town right now and some locations along the West Bay Road. Madam Speaker, I will also say this, I do not believe that in the short term that the Government is going to be able to afford such a programme. So, I believe that the country is going to have to be looking at a private/public partnership to achieve this. But let me say this immediately, Madam Speaker, because here lies the difference with what was and what the thought is. Because the Water Authority is self-sufficient and actually can be seen to be making a profit because of its ability to continue its infrastructure works without having to seek financing to do so, Madam Speaker, everything that I've heard before now about the any public/private partnership of sewage included the Water Authority, and I say, no. I say absolutely no. It is one of the Government entities, though there are those who are brilliant, or who think they are brilliant, who may disagree with me, well, that's tough. I think that I got a little bit of good sense too, and I have thought about this to the best of my ability. Madam Speaker, because the Authority has the ability to create the cash flow right now, any business plan would look more lucrative for anyone if, along with sewage, came the Water Authority.

And I am sorry that the Fifth Elected Member for George Town isn't here now, but maybe he is in

the precincts, because I remember hearing him make a point—this is nothing to do with him personally. But I want to take this opportunity to make my position absolutely clear. Who comes afterwards, do what they wish.

Madam Speaker, I heard about the infrastructure fund. I met with some of the principals. They asked to meet with me of that same infrastructure fund. And they asked about sewage. And I told them that this was a wonderful opportunity for a public/private partnership for sewage, what it would take would be those who had the required funding, in my view, to be willing to have a business plan that would have a 25-year return on investment, a long-term plan. Because it is going to take probably anywhere up to 10 years to roll out the whole sewage system and then continue to make it grow as the country grows. Well, the difference in what I said and what was wanted was ownership and the Water Authority. And, Madam Speaker, I am not ashamed of what I say or do. I simply said, I am not taking this as a recommendation to my Cabinet from my Ministry because I ain't doing it. And if anybody in here or altogether in here ask me tomorrow, I'm not doing it. Somebody else can do it—not me.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Simple as that.

**An Hon. Member:** I agree.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** So, it wasn't about not wanting to work with the fund in that regard. I don't know about anything else. But there are certain things, and I am not—call me old-fashioned or whatever, but I believe that there are certain things that the Government must retain control over, unless—

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** Water, sewage, garbage.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I'm just saying, Madam Speaker, unless it becomes an impossible task, I don't see why not. There are those and the same thing will happen with the waste-to-energy facility, when that comes on stream. That is going to require a public/private partnership. It is going to take a continued investment on the part of the Government for its operation, but without private sector involvement, the Government is not going to be able to afford to bite the whole thing off by itself. And that is the way it works. That's the way life is. And that is what we are faced with, because as many things as we have done right in the country is we can look at so many things that have not kept up with the rate of growth of the population and the demand for services.

So, Madam Speaker, I only say that, not to have any difficulty with any situation or anything, but I just want to make myself very clear because I don't

know what may have been said about such meetings. And those who were at the meetings, they have every right if they wish and if they think they can challenge what I have said, because I know what happened I know what I said. I don't think that will happen, but I am just saying.

So, Madam Speaker, when we talk about this great idea about an infrastructure fund, it has to be, in my view, tempered with some benefit to the people of the country somewhere along the line, not just those who have the financial ability to participate in it. That's my view.

Madam Speaker, as we move along I want to speak about the National Housing Development Trust [NHDT] for a few minutes, just to give an update. Madam Speaker, I hold the view that the previous direction or the direction in which the NHDT headed between 2009 and 2013 was the wrong one. I will tell you why. Madam Speaker, social housing and affordable housing are two totally separate, separate, separate issues. Granted, there is a common thread there with the word "housing," but it is not the same thing. You cannot successfully do affordable housing for the purposes of affordable housing and it becomes social housing. It will hang you! You have to know that when you go to create social housing, that is what you have to do. The programmes that you need have to be in place. The Government of the day, when they are doing that, have to understand that it goes with a specific cost and you have to do your business case to make sure you fully understand what you are up against because it is not just dollars you are dealing with. It is a lot of social issues. You cannot create that social housing without having the network in place. You can't do it. So, you cannot create affordable housing, deal with it as if it is social housing, and expect anything good to come out of it. It won't happen. I am no expert but I know enough about it to know that that won't happen.

So, Madam Speaker, gradually we have changed—and I am going to say something else here. Gradually we have changed and we have been able to successfully lead individuals and families into ownership of these houses of the NHDT. They are not 100 per cent all sorted out, but they are very well under way now. And the National Housing Development Trust now has enough funds back in place to build the 16 more homes in Bodden Town which they are getting ready to start as soon as we can get the Planning requirements for road access sorted. I think we are just about there now.

Madam Speaker, while it is not my subject, and while I could easily not say anything about it, let me say two minutes here, that while we looked about it, thought about it, talked about it, and were not physically able to put the financial resources to it, we, as a country, need social housing—without a shadow of a doubt. But you see it has to be in a uniform and constructive way that you do it. You can't *swish-swish*

and figure it is going to work out. It is not going to work that way. So, just like, Madam Speaker, this Government recognised that we absolutely need to work as soon as possible toward a mental health facility, and there are funds in there to get it going and I am certain that we will continue into the next budget to get to the point where we actually start construction. We need to do the same thing.

The thing about social housing, Madam Speaker, is once you put the safeguards in place, and once you have the necessary tools to work with, it can be done incrementally. You are not going to create and satisfy all the needs at one time. Every year you can put "X" amount toward it and have "X" amount of whether it is multifamily or single family homes built, depending on the structure that you want, you can actually have an allotted amount that you do every year until you catch up. But if nothing is done, you never catch up and it is only going to turn us bottom-up. So, I just thought that I needed to say that, and that, I believe, is something that we need to become a priority in short order.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Absolutely not. But I speak the good message.

Madam Speaker, with regard to NHDT, the other announcement that I have to make is that we now have, finally, agreement in principle with five of the commercial institutions to extend the GGHAM [Government Guaranteed Home Assisted Mortgage] programme, and we will be signing the agreement very early next month. The Cabinet paper is being prepared now. Once Cabinet paper is prepared, and I am doing my best to see if it is possible to get the motion here this meeting to deal with the guarantee so that we can springboard that programme again. That programme, just to remind people, in the past it has helped some 325 families get their homes. That programme is designed for people who can qualify, who have the income, and who have the disposable income to be able to qualify for mortgages up to \$250,000. The Government, once the bank is satisfied that they can make the repayments, the Government will then guarantee up to 35 per cent of the top-end of the mortgage, and once 35 per cent of the mortgage is paid down, the guarantee falls away. That's how that works. But there is still many people who are paying rent, they could make a \$1,500 a month payment on a mortgage, but they don't have what the bank requires as collateral or the down payment to get the ball rolling, and that's what this programme helps.

And, Madam Speaker, over the years, I don't remember the exact figures, but anyway, this programme is considered to be a very successful programme because what Government has had to pay by way of guarantees being called in, the total amount compared to how much the guarantees have been, is



much less percentage wise than what the institutions themselves have as bad debt. So, pound for pound, this is a successful programme and we have been working with the banks now for a couple of years trying to get it ready, and I think we will be able to sign that next month, [and] get that running again. So, I think, Madam Speaker, that, too, will create new opportunities for a certain income level of potential owners who will be able to take advantage of that.

Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** The House will now take a 10-minute afternoon break.

**Proceedings suspended at 3:58 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 4:39 pm**

**APPROPRIATION (JULY 2016 TO DECEMBER 2017) BILL, 2016**

**DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT**

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Minister responsible for Planning to continue with his debate.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to just speak a few minutes now on the Department of Agriculture. First of all I want to say how happy and proud I am that the Ministry staff and others, including the Sixth Elected Member for George Town and also members from the private sector—

**The Speaker:** Minister, you have one hour remaining.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

—have taken on the challenge of hosting the Caribbean Week of Agriculture, which is an annual event, prior to this year being limited to sovereign nations in CARICOM [Caribbean Community]. The Cayman Islands, although only an associate member—

**The Speaker:** Can I invite—

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Sure, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** —the Honourable Deputy Premier, it has reached the hour of interruption to move the appropriate motion under [Standing Order] 10(2)?

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 10(2)**

**The Deputy Premier, Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move the suspension of Standing 10(2) in order for this House to work past the hour of interruption.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** I'm just waiting also to ensure that we are being recorded. Could we have an indication from the communication box?

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be hereby suspended.

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

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** They Ayes have it.

**Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister responsible for Planning.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was saying that I was very happy that—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** That is what Agriculture does for you, Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** That's what it does?

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yeah.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I was saying that I was happy that we have been allowed the privilege of hosting the Caribbean Week of Agriculture here in Grand Cayman, in October of this year, 2016. Conveniently, the dates are such that it works very well for us because there are expected over 400 delegates, and that is when all the hotel rooms are empty. So that works very well, but that aside, Madam Speaker, the Caribbean Week of Agriculture comprises a mixture of workshops, meetings of the various regional associations and organisations and meetings of the COTED [Council for Trade and Economic Development], the special CARICOM Counsel for Trade and Economic Development. And, Madam Speaker, this year that's where the private sector comes in. Can you imagine here in our little Cayman Islands, private sector is partnering with the Government to host a

trade show? And I want to say a special thank you, Madam Speaker, to Mr. Dax Foster of Progressive Distributors, who has kindly come forward and agreed to spearhead that event.

Madam Speaker, the business of Cayman hosting the Caribbean Week of Agriculture is one that we really need to take pride in because, as an associate member of CARICOM, we have even been accepted as full members of CARDI, Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute. And, Madam Speaker, I dare say it once again, that is a first because prior to this, no other associate members have been allowed full membership of such organisations. And we have a CARDI office right out next to the Department of Agriculture building, and we have a CARDI representative who is there full time. And that is good news.

Madam Speaker, just to quickly speak a little bit about agriculture, I am very hopeful that in this upcoming fiscal year we will be able to squeeze a few more resources, especially bodies, because while I think we can take pride in the fact that there has been noticeable growth in the sector, the fact is that we are desperate with regard to people on the ground assisting our farmers and we are short on bodies, but we are hoping to get help in that area. It is another one of those situations where we know what needs to be done, but it is just a juggling act with where to put the resources with all of the various demands.

I certainly want to say that I am very proud of the farming community because we are now doing much more than in previous years. And every one, every day, at any point in time, if you go to any one of the major supermarkets you will see local produce, local vegetables, and even local meats on the shelves. And, of course, a big 'thank you' also to our local consumers who have made it very clear to the supermarkets: *You bring us the local stuff. The quality is quite good and we want to buy it.* Madam Speaker, this, in itself, is a wonderful achievement over the years. But there is much, much left to be done.

Madam Speaker, the market at the Cricket Grounds, I want to say is working very well. The weekly traffic through that place continues to increase there are some points in time, especially later on in the week and on the weekends when there is not enough space to hold everybody who wants to go there. I think very shortly the vendors, headed up by Mr. Hamlin Stephenson, and Mr. Kirkland Nixon, they will, I dare say, have to embark on increasing the size of that market at the Cricket Grounds and I think that is going very well.

So, Madam Speaker, there are many programmes that are being worked on with the resources that the department does have. The Ministry is very supportive. The very latest initiative that we have been talking about for, probably, a year and half now, but I think we are nearly there. The president of the Society and some of his colleagues recently visited farms in

Florida and we are going to be assisting the Cayman Islands Agricultural Society with getting in, probably, about 100 head of cattle because we are going to be right out very soon without the ability to supply supermarkets because the demand has outstripped the supply. And that is, if I can put it this way, that is a good complaint, because it could have been the other way around, but we have to get these animals on the Island and allow . . . because we don't want the prices to go up. And I really hope that the farmers, the supermarkets, everybody, is listening. If we allow the prices to go up for local meats, Madam Speaker, especially beef, then USDA is going to take back over again. So, we are working along with the farming community to ensure that that doesn't happen. I think that we will be able to accomplish that. We had goats come in not so long ago, and once we get the first shipment of cattle in we will be able rollout two or three times a year similar shipments, and I think after a little while they will be back on track on again, and be able to have enough breeders and enough young ones being born and all of the necessary ingredients to allow for the culling of the herds in an orderly fashion without the herds being depleted.

Madam Speaker, the last thing on agriculture is next Ash Wednesday, I believe, is March 1, 2017. I think that is the date. Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands Agricultural Society will be celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Agriculture Show here in Grand Cayman and certainly we are planning, God willing, all things going well, to have a very special show, so we will soon be commencing the groundwork for that.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** March 1, 2017.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, let me make this very clear, even though the time is short.

I am pretty sure that it is March the 1<sup>st</sup> but whatever the date that Ash Wednesday is next year, and I am pretty sure that is what the date is. That is not meant to coincide with any elections. Just to ease the mind of my good friend over the other side there. That is the date of show, which is always Ash Wednesday. And we don't plan to have another one between Ash Wednesday and elections. Okay?

*[Inaudible interjection and laughter]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Okay.

Madam Speaker, moving along, the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, all of the groundwork has been done. We just have to now allow stakeholders to make their comments on the draft and then we will table the policy and that is after Cabinet has adopted in

it, and at that point in time, we will have a national Food and Nutrition Security Policy.

Madam Speaker, Lands and Survey Department which plays a very important role in business here in Cayman, besides its role of land registry, the department has embarked on several new initiatives. There is online form system, which is available to individual organisations and agents who need to lodge land transactions. The system will be introduced in July and this will certainly improve the customer service experience. Unlike the current system where delays and errors are evident, this new product will significantly reduce turnaround times for registrations, it will improve the accuracy and customer service, and it certainly will reduce the burden on Lands and Survey staff, which will give them time to be more efficient in other areas.

There is also document imaging and conversion. The document and conversion system brings to the customer, Madam Speaker, the improved chain of custody and a much more cost-effective records management programme. Day-to-day document imaging and conversion has commenced, has already started, from January in the department. The remaining records will be scanned over the course of the next two years, which will enable everyone, anywhere, and at any time, access to these public records. The system will not only maintain but also assist in mitigating risks and liabilities associated with historic and current transactions. Establishment of the electronic system should also ensure that the registry will undertake superior tracking and auditing processes of current transactions in leveraging the technology.

Madam Speaker, there is also the system of escrow accounts where, although e-filing and e-conveyancing is the ultimate goal, as changes in the law and significant changes to working procedures are required, the department recognises, and the Ministry for that matter, recognises that it is unrealistic to expect to achieve this outcome within a relatively short timeframe, so the proposed escrow account system is seen as a very useful step toward reducing costs, turnaround times, and errors while improving customer service, which is the end game of all of these improvements that are being sought. For individuals, organisations, and agents who need to lodge land transactions, the escrow accounting system will improve their customer experience. Payments can be deposited to an account created for a particular customer facilitating easy drawdown for payments of registration fees, stamp duty, provisions of copies amongst other services, and is unlike the system that exists today where delays could even lead to cheques being stale dated and amounts on the cheques being incorrect. This produce will reduce wait times (and that is not W-E-I-G-HT like what I need to lose but W-A-I-T) and improve accuracy and customer service. It will reduce the number of errors and omissions with regard to the preparation of cheques for payments at

Lands and Survey; it will improve the revenue collection process; it will support the Government policy of digital by default; and it certainly will reduce all overall administrative and operational costs.

Madam Speaker, an outline business case has been prepared to support the sale of surplus Government land assets by the Valuation and Estates Office. And this document is currently awaiting review by the Business Case Review Panel prior to submission to Cabinet. The list of surplus property assets proposed to be offered for sale will shortly be sent to all Members of the Legislative Assembly on a district basis inviting their comment before finalising the recommendations.

Madam Speaker, to the ICTA [Information and Communications Technology Authority] now: The Authority under—well, it's not brand new management now, but relatively new management now, there are five top priorities which have been identified. The 911 upgraded project, certainly, is one of the most important ones, and this is a joint project between ICTA and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, what the Member is just asking me about the text messages we received from 911, I will have to find that out. I can't answer you right off, but I will find it out.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I understand.

So, anyway, Madam Speaker, the 911 upgrade is a very important one of the five projects and the ICTA is project managing the 911 emergency services connectivity.

There is also quality of service, where draft consumer protection regulations to ensure consumers receive the services they are paying for each month, they have been drafted and are going through the process of being approved by Cabinet and getting down here as quickly as possible.

Madam Speaker, network quality regulations, in light of the disturbing number of outages which continue to plague the telecommunication networks, the ICTA has drafted regulations that speak to the location of telecommunications network equipment. In other words, the regulations will make it mandatory for all telecommunications network equipment needed to complete a call to be located here in Grand Cayman. So, it doesn't have to be routed all over the world, including the North American continent to get back here. Madam Speaker, the ICTA is also addressing a number of issues under the heading of choice and competition.

1. The publication of a choice map, indicating where services are available across the Islands, not where they are purported

to be available but where they actually are.

2. Fibre-optic cable roll-out; that is, holding licensees accountable for their fibre roll-out commitments to ensure everyone in the country benefits from choice and competition.

Now, Madam Speaker, just pausing for a minute—the business of fines which were a subject of a previous meeting, in all of what I am talking about here now, the ability for them to do administrative fines is going to play a very, very important role in the whole affair. There has been a big hold-up too, Madam Speaker, with the dispute—and they call it the pole attachment dispute—where CUC’s off-shoot datalink and the service providers were always at odds because there were differing contractual arrangements and there was not uniformity or speed in what it cost for some service providers to have access to CUC’s infrastructure; that is, datalink, and also the timeliness of the permission granted. So, ICTA did a dispute resolution. They resolved the dispute amongst the licensees regarding how to attach fibre cables to light poles, and this long-awaited dispute determination was published last week and it will pave the way for faster and less expensive fibre deployment on CUC light poles.

There is also a problem of access to buried ducts (D-U-C-T-S). This is certainly a long outstanding bone of contention and very similar to the pole issue. It affects the ability of service providers to quickly build their networks and reach customers who want their services. So, Madam Speaker, there will be uniformity in that created by way of whatever statute is needed. And the universal service network, the authorities exploring how to create this network to reach the customers in North Side, East End, and the sister Islands in a much more cost-effective way. Because, truth be known, Madam Speaker, while these licensees, as part and condition of their licences, are charged with providing these services in these districts. They simply say they just can’t afford it because the demand is not to the point where the return on the investment—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes. I know. Reality has set in, but the ICTA is a realistic fashion searching—not searching, but wanting to get to a point where all of these services are provided throughout all of the districts in all three Islands. So, the universal service network, it is hoped that this will speed-up the fibre roll-outs and bring services to customers in the rural areas faster and at a lower cost than the model that is being used today. The matter of cybersecurity, Madam Speaker, is one that our everyday lives don’t call for us paying much attention to, but it is a . . . the best way for me to say it is “a big something.” It is not an

ordinary something. ICTA’s special team called the Cyber Incident Response Team Cayman [CIRT-KY] will continue to coordinate defensive and responsive strategies across industry, the utilities and transport sectors, law enforcement, and financial services sectors.

In December of last year, Madam Speaker, Cabinet issued a directive to establish a special cybersecurity working group to fix known cybersecurity issues across the public sector. That team consists of the ICTA, e-Government, and Ministry of Home Affairs. This team, known as the CIG Cyber Team, working from the report, the Interpol visit, and the report by the Auditor General on information systems, and their own experiences, provided Cabinet with an information security plan in February of this year. Two RFPs for equipment and expertise have been completed and the projects are to be kicked-off this month and early next month. And, of course, as I’ve just mentioned, Madam Speaker, with the recent passage of the Bill, to increase administrative finds, ICTA will finally begin to enforce rules and regulations across the board.

Madam Speaker, the Public Works Department [PWD] are continuing to carry out their core functions and their focus this year will again be to provide the customers with measurable improvements and the quality timeliness and cost of the services that PWD provides. Significant gains have been achieved in these areas in recent years, but certainly there is scope, Madam Speaker, for further improvement.

**An Hon. Member:** Much improvement! Much!

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, I want to quickly inform the public who may not be aware of what is happening in South Sound. They will notice some road works going on there, and just to quickly say what the plan is. We have been talking to all of the landowners from the western boundary of . . . Oh, my Lord.

*[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Cayman Crossing. From the western boundary of the Cayman Crossing Development to the western boundary of where the launching ramp is on South Sound. There is a 50-foot road reserved there and the NRA is in the process now of shifting the road over 10 feet so that we can have 10 more feet of beach access, which will allow for the space to build the boardwalk and also the cycling lane.

Madam Speaker, while the parcels are privately owned, except for what the Government owns, this stretch of land is not able to be developed because of its proximity to the high-water mark and we

do know that from time to time the public visits those areas and we have been talking to owners simply to create—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** —simply to put, to provide the amenities and allow for recreational space for the public to enjoy. The parking lot and the launching ramp are going to be redone and extended. There will be bathroom facilities created there and hopefully we will be able to put some benches so that people can actually sit whenever they want to just relax there with their family on that stretch.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** You're making a beach?

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** If we can make it a beach?

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Yeah.

Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts: Help me to convince somebody that we can take out the turtle grass and we will certainly be happy to make it a beach.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Sorry?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I think your memory is short.

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** That's what I'm talking about.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to just to say to you, we have that in mind. What I didn't want to do was to begin to make promises and then another world war erupts.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I'm not suggesting. I don't know what—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes, but what I don't know. . . and I mean, I have to be honest about it. I don't know what the possible damage is. If the damage is more than what it is worth to create such a little beach site, then we will have to see. I am not—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Yes, and I agree with that. And certainly I think that will be an improvement and certainly making that available for public use is something that good.

So, Madam Speaker, that is something that we are working on and we will continue to see that process through while having discussions with property owners and adjoining landowners to ensure that everybody is happy, or at least that it is acceptable to all. Because the truth is, Madam Speaker, if people so choose, they could use the law and make life difficult for what we want to create.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** There are some people. We have tried to work with them and amend the plans to get to the point where people will accept.

Madam Speaker, I would implore people who are directly affected, one way or the other, to at least let us have the discussion so that we don't end up in a situation where we are at odds. I mean, what has actually been said is as an old person would say, *if push comes to shove*, you could use the [Land] Acquisition Law, but I don't want to go there because that is not the flavour of what we want to achieve. So, Madam Speaker, hopefully we will be able to get that all sorted out.

The Major Projects Office of PWD is actually functioning, Madam Speaker, and they will continue to manage the airport's redevelopment project; the cruise berthing facility project; the integrated solid waste management system project; the John Gray High School project, which is currently in phase two, the completion of the gymnasium. And there is also the outline business case being prepared for the court facility; the new police station; and the long-term residential and mental health facility project. So, that Major Projects Office, Madam Speaker, actually has a very important role to play.

Madam Speaker, the Planning Department continues to seek ways and means to enhance its operational efficiencies and the online Planning portal system is continuing on, and the objective there, is to automate and streamline the current workflow processes. This also will include the ability to accept online payments, and that certainly will make a lot of improvement for the efficiencies in the operations of the department.

The adoption of a paperless application and processing workflows; the increase of electronic tools to allow clients to track the status of their application will make the application process more transparent and will bring about the ease of use and efficiency.

Madam Speaker, we are also in the process of adopting the International Building Code (IBC 2009) along with other supporting codes and standards. The existing code is really, really out of date.

This year in the 2016/17 Budget, additional funding has been provided to the department which will allow the department to increase its efficiency and its productivity by employing two additional combination inspectors (commercial) and one combination plans examiners to ensure that projects such as redevelopment of the airport, and other private sector projects which are fairly large projects, are inspected in a timely manner. And in addition to this, these additional resources will allow the department to turnaround requests for plan reviews and inspection, with a reduced timeframe for those, and also other projects.

The Builders Law and the Builders Board, that board I expect to start meeting by early next month. And, Madam Speaker, the Builders Board and the law coming into effect will provide much-needed regulatory oversight to the construction industry. And for that matter, related professions so as to enhance the level of competency in the industry and to drive efficiency in the permitting processes.

Madam Speaker, there are further amendments to the Development and Planning Law and Regulations which are working their way down to this Legislative Assembly in short order.

Madam Speaker, the NRA [National Roads Authority] has been, I dare say, very active, very busy. The local district road programme—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your termination time is 5:32.

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Thank you.

Madam Speaker, the NRA, as I said, is very busy. In this budget there is \$3.4 million for road works island-wide amongst the various districts. The district road programme is constantly expanding. There is now over 200 miles of residential roads, Madam Speaker. We also have funds for drainage wells and, Madam Speaker, outside of the district roads there is also \$7.2 million for the material, labour and equipment for construction, plus Project Management Services related to the general maintenance and upkeep of our roads, such as bush cutting, signage, barricades, traffic signals, speed bumps, pavement markings, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, there is a long list of things that the NRA have as to what they hope to achieve, which time will not allow me to speak to. But I am sure when we get to Finance Committee whatever questions Members have and whatever their wishes and desires are, we will see how best we can accommodate in order to assist the people. I just want to say quickly, Madam Speaker, that the two largest road projects which the NRA will supervise, or oversee, in the 2016/17 fiscal period, is the continuation of the Esterley Tibbetts Highway, up to what I call it, the AL Thompson roundabout.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Dart Group has committed from the Galleria Roundabout,

where the new road is going, coming all the way past the Camana Bay Roundabout that exists now and up to where the airport connector road in the future will join to make that two lanes both ways. When that job that they are already working on now, if that is completed and nothing else is done, what it will mean is that at that roundabout, for the listening ears for them to picture, which is almost up to Lakeside Apartments, it means that from there to the A L Thompson roundabout will still be one lane, and the bottleneck will be created every day, back and forth, right by that roundabout, and all will be to no avail. There is no sense of that work being done without getting two lanes up to A L Thompson so that it runs from the entire Esterley Tibbetts Highway; we will have two lanes both sides. For those who live along that strip and in West Bay Proper, it is, I guess. . . the only word I can use is it is “unfair” to expect the road to get that far and not be finished. So that’s where we are at, so the plan is to finish it there.

However, in the same token, Madam Speaker, from the Tropical Gardens roundabout coming west (I call it west), coming down the Linford Pierson Highway, going down to the stop light, that’s one lane also. If you go across the stop light from the Cricket Field, you got two lanes. When you cross the stop light, going up towards the Lions Centre, all the way up until you get to the Chrissie Tomlinson roundabout by the head of Prospect, you got two lanes both sides. And then, although Spotts Straight is only one lane, you have the road going to Newlands as an option, so you have the equivalent of two lanes because you have two roads that you can get to the east with. And the road on the left going across by Poindexter and Prospect Primary School, which go into Newlands, that road services all of that development going up that way. And then you have the other one on Spotts Straight still, which carries you up that one has two lanes, one side.

So, Madam Speaker, the traffic in the eastern districts is now at the point where they are experiencing the difficulty that they used to experience, seven or eight years ago, before the East-West Arterial was built, because Linford Pierson [Highway] from the stop light coming to Tropical Gardens is only one lane. And I don’t profess that’s the complete full answer, but if you have the two-lane traffic just like you have on the West Bay Road, going that way, it will make all the difference in the world with the traffic flow.

So, Madam Speaker, those two projects are the projects we have to complete and we can’t take our time to do it. The difference in this one is—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** We are going to do it now.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Well, I could say the same thing to you, but we are not going to argue about that.

*[Inaudible interjection and laughter]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I said I could.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** I said I could; I didn't say that I did.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** Madam Speaker, but I just want for the public to understand that these are really works that are absolutely necessary to get done—absolutely necessary to get done.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts:** And the NRA is pressing on. The unfortunate—not unfortunate—but questions have been raised, Madam Speaker, as to why the Government is considering allowing Dart to actually do the work from the Airport Connector Road roundabout, up to A L Thompson and not the NRA. The fact is, Madam Speaker, both projects are going to be ongoing at the same time. And in discussions with the NRA, they have said to me, *Listen, we cannot manage both of these projects physically.* They just don't have the wherewithal to do it. But they are content and they will have oversight of the construction, just as they have oversight of the construction of the road from Galleria coming up to the Airport Connector Road.

So that is where we are with that, Madam Speaker, and it is going to be a busy time. We will just do our best to get as far as we can, as quickly as we can to ensure that the public will benefit.

Madam Speaker, there are some other road-works which we will be concentrating on and those will be in the George Town main district area as part of the George Town revitalisation plan to continue to create proper interconnectivity and also to get to the point where traffic can get and out of the district; hence, the Linford Pierson and the Esterley Tibbetts extensions becoming so absolutely necessary. Because part of the George Town revitalisation plan will be to pedestrianize some roads to make some roads one way, but you can't do that unless you create other avenues that the traffic can get in and out of where they are going. So, without this being the time to go through all of those explanations, suffice it to say, Madam Speaker, that we are looking at the whole big picture in order, at the end of the day, for all of the dots to connect.

Madam Speaker, the Postal Service goes on, continues on, and they are working on the RFP for the

mail sorter, a new mail sorting machine. That, Madam Speaker, will certainly make the Postal Service a lot more efficient.

Madam Speaker, the legislation for the public utilities is also near completion and certainly that is one of our objectives within the next few months to be able to create the public utilities commission, which that won't be the name of it, but that is what I am calling it now, where the ICTA, the ERA, the chief petroleum inspectorate, and the regulatory side of the Water Authority will become part and parcel of the one operation with one leader and each of those entities operating as a department. Madam Speaker, we have worked it all out, it is going to be self-funding, there will be no additional costs, but there will be the quality of oversight and regulation will certainly be enhanced and there will be less perceived conflicts once we have that up and running. We see great benefits once that is created. This is not one of those where you look to make situations more bureaucratic. This is for more seamless operations when it comes to regulation.

Madam Speaker, time does not allow me to say much more, but I will not ask you to have to bend over to assist with time, because I know that we do need to get to Finance Committee so that we can have the budget completed within the timeframe which the law calls for.

Madam Speaker, I want to say a special thank you to colleagues in Cabinet, and here is this Legislative Assembly, even though many times we are not on the same side, I still thank God that I am able to work along with colleagues in whatever subjects I have to do the best to make sure that we do all we can to assist the constituents and to try to make the country better on a large scale. I say a special thank you to my Ministry team, the staff, and all the various departments. So that everybody will understand, I am not perfect, and I don't expect everybody else to be perfect. But while I am telling them thank you, I am saying in the same breath for them who are listening and they can pass the message, *You got plenty of work ahead of you this year, and I hope you are prepared for it.*

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

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

I recognise the Third Elected Member for the District of West Bay.

*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush, Third Elected Member for West Bay:** Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, I have listened intently to previous speeches and I was very surprised by some of the things that were said, and also very surprised by some of the things that were not said.

Madam Speaker, I have listened intently to the same thing being said over and over and over. And there was a former Prime Minister from one of our fellow Caribbean countries who said: *If you say the same thing over and over and over, eventually people will think that they are saying it.* I don't know if they are trying to convince themselves, or trying to convince the people of this country. They kept saying that they took over the Government in a mess. Madam Speaker, how can you get a country with a surplus and say it is in a mess? Madam Speaker, to quote a good friend of mine, he said: "You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts."

Madam Speaker, there are two questions that have been asked of me since the Throne Speech has been made. The First Elected Member for Bodden Town asked it and so did other Members, and that is, *If prices have fallen, please tell us which supermarkets it is in, our people want to know so they can go and shop there as well because the shops that we frequently go to, we see no prices falling at all.*

Madam Speaker, I keep hearing that life has gotten better. But in talking with our people on the streets, they are saying that it has gotten worse. The Leader of the Opposition did a good job of showing where the present Government is benefiting from projects put in place by the previous Government. The Hansards are full of many speeches where the Premier and his colleagues are taking the previous UDP apart for the Shetty Hospital project, working with the Dart Group, and every other conceivable object that was put forward. But now the shoe is on the other foot. They have to say, Madam Speaker, *Thank the Lord for Dart.* And, Madam Speaker, personally, I would say thank you to the Shetty Hospital.

Madam Speaker, I hear about these bad deals. Time will tell if the deals that have now been rearranged, to use a favourite phrase of the Leader of the Opposition, and that is: *It the same deal, but just with a red dress on it.* We will see in due time, Madam Speaker. Everything eventually comes to light. What was not said at all is this so-called mess that the country was in, but once again, there was a surplus. No one has said it was the PPM Government that first broke the country. It was their actions that caused us to have to take our budgets and send them to England to get approved—all under the PPM—that cannot be refuted.

What was also not said in this speech, Madam Speaker, there are some Caymanians, long-term civil servants who, when certain entities became authorities, they went with them. They had no choice. And now, all of a sudden, they are retired and they are being told they have no pension, or hardly any pension. They have no continued health insurance and, I heard nothing said about this. I am happy to say, once again, at times in my contribution here, you will hear me take a little joog, as we would phrase it, at the

Deputy Governor, but I must give him credit for being aware of it and saying he wonders why so as well.

Madam Speaker, we have to look out for these people. They are our own. They don't have two or three passports so they can run someplace else. They don't have a million dollars sitting down, they can't retire off of anything else, and they have to survive, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the wonderful thing to hear is this surplus. When there was a surplus, when they got there, it was mess. But now that they have a surplus, it is the greatest thing since ice cream. But, Madam Speaker, not very much has been said about people out there saying that they are not getting any help. We are talking about legitimate people, not lazy people. One simple area that has been identified is at the Health Services. People are saying that for years they would take their CINICO [Cayman Islands National Insurance Company] card, go to the pharmacy at the hospital and get their medication. All of a sudden now, Madam Speaker, certain medications are not there. So what they have to do? They have to go a pharmacy, use their own money, and hope they are being reimbursed. Madam Speaker, show me, show me the compassion. Show me where the care is for our people.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Correct. And from what I understand, Madam Speaker, when CINICO was designed, this is what it was built for.

Let us start with some of the great facts. One of the things, like I said earlier, the Minister of Financial Services said on a few occasions that the cost of living down, quality of life up. Everything is up *that is good.* Like I said, Madam Speaker, the people on the streets are telling me it is not so at all. And then, they went on to say that they have put the country out of the financial mess. Once again, how can a surplus be called a financial mess? If I remember correctly, I heard my colleague here for West Bay, the Fourth Elected Member say, every time they collected the Government back, it was broke. Then, I heard the Minister for Financial Services praise one of the other ministries and said that there were no cuts in services. That part I remember clearly. Madam Speaker, anyone who can get their hands on a AP&E Book [Annual Plan & Estimates 2016/17], look on page 194, [NGS 63] school lunches; this year it was \$424,000. Next year it is \$124,000. That is \$300,000, a 70 per cent cut. And, for the six months, \$62,000.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** The Minister of Education, I can't believe you allowed them to do that, but I know for sure you will look into it. It is not your Ministry, but it says "school lunches." So somewhere... but of



course, that is not a cut, Madam Speaker, in the PPM terms. That's just something that they will name it later on.

**Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Good management.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Good management and put a red dress on it.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, work permits—2014/15, \$61 million; 2015/16, \$62 million; 2016/17, \$99.75 [million]. That was something to look at, Madam Speaker. So work permit holders will increase by 1,300 in three months. A friend of mine sent me this on Facebook today, and he said, *Look at this*. "The policy statement in December 2015 forecast job increase by 488, or 244 jobs per year for two years." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE] Now, I want the PPM to explain to the country how this will work out. [There are] 1,300 more permits but only projected 488 jobs, and this does not include 600 students coming out of the high schools and another 100 coming home from universities.

Madam Speaker, this next topic is something that is very dear—and why? [Hurricane] Ivan still stands out in my mind, clearly. There was a lot of *come home to Jesus moments* for a lot of people in this country during that hurricane and the people who stood out the most in that were our firemen. I looked in the Throne Speech, not one mentioned. In the Premier's speech, not one mentioned.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** He glazed over them. But, Madam Speaker—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** —But the way these men are being treated and disrespected is not surprising. You know why, Madam Speaker? It's all Caymanians, mainly from poor stock, but good people.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Yes, poor families. Let me rephrase that—poor families. Let me rephrase it better; from poor families. They haven't come with gold spoons in their mouths. Madam Speaker, in this debate we have heard about the mistreatment of Caymanians in the work force. But what I see our local firemen going through every day is a disgrace. Madam Speaker, just look at the West Bay Fire Station, which I frequently [visit] often—not so much the one in town these days—it has been confirmed that this

building has mould. The Central Station, which is designed as a hurricane shelter, is also not in tip-top shape. When they had the rain the other day, I stopped there to pick up some mangoes and, Madam Speaker, it was leaking. Fans have to be used in a ventilated place that doesn't seem too healthy. Madam Speaker, that is only one part of their health that our firemen have to go through.

Let us look at another serious health risk for our firemen. The beautiful Mount [Trashmore], the amount of times that they have gone up there to fight fires, all those toxins, and all this stuff, Madam Speaker, they face. These are all our Caymanian men, and a lot of young men with families. They are the ones that when everybody else is running out or away, they are having to run in or toward the danger. The country should remember, Madam Speaker, who it was that saved lives during Hurricane Ivan. Ask the former chief who just beautifully did a wonderful job with the former Speaker of the House, Ms. Mary Lawrence, in dealing with that rush PR job and different names that people refer to it as—thank God they were there! Ask the former fire chief when they reached the police station what they were told. He asked for gold control and there were two West Indians officers working, Madam Speaker, and their exact words were, *You mean the yellow control?* They could not be found, but our firemen were doing jobs out there, acting as security so looting would not go on, besides the saving of lives, and there was never any doubt as to the lives that they saved. We can bring many people to tell you they waded through. . . go down in. . .

*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** —Randyke Gardens and those types of places and ask people who were on their roofs how the firemen got them out when there was not another foot to go.

Madam Speaker, go to some of the accident scenes that are happening now. It is the firemen doing medical procedures, but everybody else stand up and watch unless the EMT's happen to reach there in time. Go to these accidents and see who it is that is cutting people out of vehicles. And, go to a crime scene when somebody has been shot and see who is running the lights for the police. It is our firemen.

Madam Speaker, can you imagine working for 28 years and not making \$3,000 a month, and trying to build a home, or raise a family, and school your children. Madam Speaker, there was a remark passed about the educational level and some of those that have gotten into the Fire Service. Madam Speaker, the only thing not smart about our firemen is that they don't stick together enough to make us respect them and their work.

I happened to stop by there one day, Madam Speaker, and there were three young men sitting [with] a new defibrillator, what you use to shock peo-

ple. They were talking about how it has to be aligned with this and that, and if they are very hairy what you have to do quickly. All this stuff and I am saying to myself, *You mean to tell me that these guys aren't smart?*

Madam Speaker, you heard the good reports on tourism, except for one little piece. Does this country realise that the day that those firemen all call in sick, there is not a plane that can land without the firemen?

Madam Speaker, the Deputy Governor in the *Compass* on April the 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015, said, and I quote, **"I have advised our staff that it is our intention to relax the ban on within-grade increments to reward staff who have obtained additional qualifications [or] are performing their jobs more proficiently as a result of years of experience."** And, Madam Speaker, to his word, he stated it again, yesterday or this morning, whenever he spoke. Madam Speaker, this beautiful, well said, well-written piece, for some reason does not extend to our firemen. Because there are 12 to 15 of them over the last couple of years that have gotten degrees and graduated with honours and it has done them no good. But, once again, the Deputy Governor spoke about it yesterday.

The police have had two pay raises. But the ones at the bottom say that it didn't reach them, it was only certain ones at the top; that is what the police tell me. Prison got, Customs got, and Immigration, but they all deserved it. They are some hard-working departments. Go sit down in a day in that Immigration and see what they have to go through. Go sit in with Customs and, Oh, God, you have to have more patience than Job, Madam Speaker. Before you could go clear a set of cars in one day and now it takes you three days.

Madam Speaker, the firemen, and especially their families, because some of them are afraid, they are very scared to talk, and one of them I said, *I cannot believe you*. He said, *Mr. Bush, I have a family to feed and a mortgage to pay. I don't have any place to run*. Why have our brave Caymanian men been neglected so? Madam Speaker, a fire officer of over 25 years, experienced, close to 30, according to his wife, and has a degree, is making less than a rookie police officer just entering the force.

The Deputy Governor spoke about the teachers, and once again, about the police getting a pay raise. Thank the Lord, the teachers are finally being thought about, because the same thing that was happening there, where you have rookie teachers coming in making the same amount of money as teachers who have been there 10, 15 years. And the Deputy Governor, to his credit, has said he is trying to address this. It is the same thing in the Fire Service. There's a 15-year veteran making the same \$2,700 as a rookie. Madam Speaker, something is not right. Please, please, these men, but the firemen are only . . . yes, it was mentioned yesterday, but as usual, it

just—whoosh, like the Throne Speech, it is not even mentioned. Thank God you remembered them and said something yesterday. And even that, Deputy Governor, through you Madam Speaker, we have to wonder because we have heard stuff before, but the firemen are always last.

Let us look, Madam Speaker, at some of the contributions the Deputy Governor made. In the beginning, I too, earlier, when the First Elected Member for Bodden Town made that beautiful statement about cheerleading, I thought he too had become president at the cheerleading club, but then, thanks to the Deputy today . . . Leader of the Opposition, it got him to say clearly that the things that he was talking that were so bad were nothing to do with any party. It was civil servants. What a thing to get that out of him yesterday.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, it was nice for him to let us know about the survey as well, within the civil servants. Some of the things that he found, I could have told him. Some of his biggest . . . let's look at some of his chief officers. The first year I sat in this place I asked for the qualifications of a senior policy advisor—didn't get it; didn't get it the next year. And then, I brought it up to the Deputy Governor, and it is in the Hansard. He promised to get it to me here three times now, twice by his chief officer and once by him, and I've yet to get the qualifications. Three years waiting, and I wait every year specifically for this time to ask for it now. That same chief officer for some reason . . . here is this wonderful Government over here talk about doing so many things Caymanian, and the Deputy Governor is doing a beautiful show with that Deputy Governor's *healthy 5K*, or whatever it is called. And what does that officer do? Take the money and send it England instead of buying the shirts locally. As the money reaches to England, the company closed down or was sold, and we lost all that money, and we don't have it back yet. Mr. Deputy Governor, you have to get these chief officers, like the rest of them, you try and start with them.

The next one is last year for one of them to stand in here and tell us an outright lie saying that a contract had been signed. When I got the copy of the contract, and it says it was signed a week later or two weeks later.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** That it had been signed here.

Two weeks later he was in England. That's when it was signed. I guess he was up getting his MI6, or whatever, briefing, but we hope this MIA as to a people missing, with that kind of briefing he was getting, missing in action.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Anyhow, I applaud the quality of work that the Deputy Governor is trying to do with the civil service. I remember saying to him that the first line of people coming in here was at the airport. Those two specific set of people need to be told that when they are greeting people, leave their problems at home. But there is one there in particular that everybody talks about, but I guess when you from the right area and from the right set of people, nothing can be said. But, Madam Speaker—

[Pause]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** —like I said, what was also amazing, besides telling us a lie, is that when the Caymanian was finally given the post after applying five times, what changed on the application between the other times? Not one “I” or not one “T.” But just because when it was highlighted in here almost two years in a row, the Deputy Governor said, *Enough is enough*. I am giving you credit for that, you know. I am not giving it to him, your chief officer any credit. He would have held back that Caymanian until Jesus left Chicago. But, Madam Speaker, they have got to wake up because we are the watchdogs, and believe you me, between that corner there and this piece right here, we get enough information. And it is all factual. I remember the faces last year when I was telling them the dates when they sent out their e-mails, they did not even know it themselves. That is one thing I’ve learned. Do not ask a question unless you’ve got the answer.

Madam Speaker, I have to make this one good. It might be my last time here. I got to make this one real good.

**Mr. V. Arden McLean:** Oh boy! You deal with um. Give him his water there McKeeva. Drink ya water and beat man!

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, I want the Deputy Governor to know that this is why Caymanians in the civil service are discouraged. The pay is bad enough, but they feel that they are getting a fight. And plenty times it is from people from the outside, not even their own. But, Deputy Governor, we wish you well in your fight. Let’s hope you are not encouraging them.

Madam Speaker, I sat very intently and took notes for two hours on our beautiful education dream. Madam Speaker, it is quite obvious that the Ministry of Education should tell us from which countries teachers are being recruited and what is the composition of the teachers being recruited.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** The composition.

My understanding and information, Madam Speaker, is that advertisement for teachers has now been shifted to throw it out of the Caribbean, but it has seriously only being done that in the UK. I have gotten a hold and I have it, going through it, and my next step is to get one of the applications received from the UK and compare it to what our West Indian people have to go through when they apply here. And I will get it. But the thing that amazes me is that we have, rightfully so, gone back to CXC [Caribbean Examinations Council]. Everybody agrees that is the right thing, regardless of both sides. But the thing that I have heard, I think it was the Member for North Side who told the Governor and the Deputy Governor at the Glass House when we met that the civil service has a *habit of putting round pegs in square holes*. We are recruiting people from the UK who know nothing about the CXC. Is it because the Human Resource officer at the Ministry who was one of those people who came through something called “POC” and he is from the great country, from the UK? Is it because that person may be comfortable with people from her or his own country?

Madam Speaker, they are also getting from other countries, and I have one here, and we have heard us talk in here many times, where they try to tell us about our accents. Madam Speaker, this one takes it to another level. Yes, here it is. This is what one of our staff members in the Education Ministry sent to her friend— “Please take a moment to read the eyewitness statement and see what I what am working with over here. I do a lot of smiling and nodding when my local co-workers talk.” [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

I also handed another 21 pages of other stuff by another one of these people that they had up on their Facebook, or whatever, the blogs, or whatever you want to call [that] stupidity. And these are the people we insist on bringing over here to work with our children. The last time I spoke I closed by saying that there is an African proverb, “Only a fool lets the enemy educate his children.” Almost every good Caymanian we’ve had has moved out and gone to work in the private schools. I will get to that in a few minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the attrition rate of teachers not renewing their contracts is high and some of them are our best teachers. There have never been so many complaints from teachers in the past until this new regime took over three years ago. Teachers have been put [under] undue stress and pressure and this has been causing the Government a lot of money as a result of the high absence of teachers from various schools due to illness. Now, believe you me, Madam Speaker, I am proud that this new chief officer they have. He has only been there about a year, he is making all of them pull up their pants or pull down their dresses, whichever way you want to use the phrase,

but they are doing it. And that is good, because some of them had to do it.

Teachers complain that they do not have enough time to teach the curriculum which is already overloaded because of the demands of their time to attend to the large amount of paperwork now required by DES [Department of Education Services] and MOE [Ministry of Education]. According to education regulations, every child is entitled to five hours of instruction daily. But ask any teacher if they get the five hours in. Not in the primary schools! And I visit three on a regular basis.

I have visited three different schools, Madam Speaker, and observed how much time teachers spend just on getting the children to settle and to attend before teaching can take place. Many of these children have special [education] needs, i.e., attention deficit, and the teachers have to deal with all of the variety of the disciplinary problems that they pose. Not all teachers get assistance either, Madam Speaker, from teacher's aides, or support aides. For some, it becomes very challenging to cope, especially with large classes and where more and more children need individual attention. Some teachers need to learn to manage their classrooms as well, and I do hope that that is included in your new package, Madam Minister. I do hope that is so.

The Minister of Education has set targets for our students to attain, and yet the students are not provided with the necessary textbooks that they need to use to reinforce when they are taught, and to greater extent to allow parents to see what they are doing in schools. With the absence of textbooks, the work of teachers has tripled in that they have to be sourcing material, photocopying so much at times that schools do not even have the paper or toner on which to photocopy, and they have to literally beg to get these resources. Madam Speaker, it just does not make sense that we beat up our teachers and our students to say that they are underperforming when we have not given them the necessary tools with which to work. Killing teachers with onerous paperwork and unnecessary policies is only taking away all creativity from teachers.

Madam Speaker, we spent over \$200,000 designing these books. They were designed by two Caymanians, Mr. Watler and Mr. Crawford. And Madam Speaker, those books, do you know where I first found those books? In Jamaica. When people are applying for their residence or status, they have to use these books. The private schools are using these books. But our Government schools that we paid for, for the books, are not using these books. They are using them in some schools as something to refer to, reference books. Now, I've come to understand in here that there is a move to revise them using—can you believe this? After they were good books, and they were designed by two local people, well educated, well qualified, now they are going to use outside

experts—again! And we know where they are coming from—Canada or the UK—who do not understand our culture. Outside experts, once again, that money leaves us and goes to the great overseas. Like I've said here many times, we are doing a good job at helping England with their unemployment. I'm not so sure about ours, but I am sure we are helping Canada and England with theirs.

Madam Speaker, I implore the Minister of Education to visit our schools in order to get first-hand knowledge. And don't just walk through, go there without the press. Go there without them expecting you to come, and just go and sit down and watch and walk through. Just go there. Go and get first-hand knowledge of what really goes on in these classrooms before they make the kind of decisions they feel they are making. In my view, there is a big disconnect between the decisions made at the DES and MOE and the reality of what exists in schools.

Madam Speaker, both of my children attended a Government school system and they have done very well for themselves. I want to commend, I think it is the Third or Fourth Elected Member for George Town, the Minister of Finance. His children went to George Town Primary, but outside of that, find anybody else in here with their children going to a public school; and, Madam Speaker, you too. But the Brac is a different case.

Madam Speaker, I too now feel that if I had a child of that age, I'm not sure if I could send them to the public school. Our private schools locally are good schools. Why do we have to keep on getting people from overseas to tell us what to do, where we can do it here ourselves, and go to the local schools and see what they are doing. Now, keep in mind, Madam Speaker, we have parents that when you pay that type of money, you have to pay attention to your children. I admit that is one of the shortcomings in our schools. Some of the parents don't pay attention, but I am convinced, Madam Speaker, they were before. Our Government schools can be equally as good or better if students and teachers are given more positive encouragement. Parents becoming more actively involved in their children's education, teachers are allowed to teach without being bombarded with requests for this and that, less interference from DES and MOE, and a more realistic, manageable curriculum.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to talk about my district. On two occasions, I heard it before I got elected and I've heard it twice since I got elected, that when you go up into certain sections of the Department of Education, that the remark is made like when you talk about some children, *Oh, they're from West Bay*. In other words, don't worry about them, we don't expect anything or we can't expect any better. That type of tune, Madam Speaker. Madam Minister, let them know that the day, the same how I got that on the phone and I gave the other one to one of your

senior officers, the 21 pages of other stuff blogging, the day I find that one, I will publically name and shame them. Because I can tell you this much, everything we have in West Bay is a diamond.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** That's right.

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition:** Oh yeah, you can believe that . . . even though one of them gone with the PPM.

**Hon. Tara A. Rivers:** Try hush!

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, many changes are needed when it comes to developing school policies and their implementation. I've been reliably informed that most policies developed by the MOE staff responsible, are just downloaded from the UK site. And I have one of those where they even forgot to take out the part where it said "UK." I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about plagiarism, believe you me, the kings and queens of plagiarism, I feel work in our education system.

Madam Speaker, this is wrong and unprofessional. If teachers and specialised support staff are not a part of the process, they can't own what is delivered to them. And no matter how good or bad these policies may be, they are seen as a burden to teachers to implement, and that is exactly how it is viewed by many, if not all, teachers. How many teachers since September have left and returned home to their countries of origin even before starting their contract, due to the amount of work they discovered they had to do, the number of different policies that they have to implement, and the general day-to-day tasks that they had to perform? I am not a teacher, but I have one that lives in my house, Madam Speaker. And when I am going in and see the light down in the office, and I can't get into my own office, and see the lights on and hear the computer going and hear the printer going, all I am saying to myself is, *That's my paper*. But love of something is something you can't take from people.

I work in a community and I also work in this country, its schools, and the horror stories I have seen and heard are frightening to say the least, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, when you think of all of the amount of money that is being spent on education, and we know it is not enough, but we should still have a much better system in place, but this will never happen until we have Caymanians being in charge of our system and not those who we have let in from the Mother Country where education is a big failure, compared to the rest of the world, to determine what our teachers should teach and what our children should learn, and I make no apologies for that statement. I ask—who are the people making decisions as to what our children are learning in the curriculum? It is not

Caymanians. Who are our policy advisors? Not Caymanians. Well, we got one now. Thank the Lord. Who is responsible for recruiting our teachers? Not Caymanians. Our HR lady who is Caymanian but she is not responsible. It is coming down from above her, from what I have been made to understand. Where do we look for a model education system? The UK? No, Madam Speaker, that's failing. But yet, many of us send our children to private schools we consider to be good. Then why if these private schools are so good, the MOE does not adopt what they are doing, or implement it in our schools, since, according to the most recent school inspection report, all of our Government schools are failing with the exception of one primary school?

Madam Speaker, it is about time that us as Caymanians take back our schools.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Correct. Well said. If the UK system is so good, why are our private schools in Cayman not using them?

Madam Speaker, what is the purpose of having school improvement officers whose task is to work with principals and staff on areas of weakness identified in their schools if they are only used to being bearers of bad news rather than spending time in the schools for which they are responsible and help to boost up teacher's morale and improve performance and ultimately the student's achievement? Up to eight years ago this was what was expected of these improvement officers. Why have their roles now changed so much?

Something that was interesting, hiring of teachers for the Lighthouse School who were not necessarily good fits for the school due to limited experience in working with a special education school. This is what has been going on, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, in my school in West Bay we have teachers who are not teachers teaching and teaching for a few years. They were teacher's aides, and because they were short they put the teacher [aide] into the classroom and now they are there teaching full time. And we have more than one, in my school in West Bay.

**An Hon. Member:** John A. Cumber.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** I refuse to say that word, sir. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, another disconnect; IB [International Baccalaureate®] schools. West Bay Primary—and this is a good system, I agree with the Minister on that. See we agree on three things now, Madam Minister. But here is the disconnect: When the West Bay children leave West Bay, which is a baccalaureate school, they go to John Gray, which is not. Clifton Hunter is the IB school.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** It is not an IB school?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**An Hon. Member:** Savannah.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** So Clifton Hunter is not an IB school? Well, that is a big disconnect. I am wrong on that one, Madam Speaker. But let's get back to the IB. We have some inspectors here now, and just to show you the amount of respect that we get in our education system. Tuesday, our off day, of course, I was not here. What did I do? What I do every day if I'm not here, I go to West Bay Primary at one o'clock, two o'clock and I start to coach as soon as the children come out. I see a lot of people from the banks and different business places come into the school for the reading programme. And, Madam Speaker, there were two ladies walking about in beautiful sundresses, tourist dresses, like you're getting ready to you go to the beach with slippers on. So I said, *You having tourist come to read?* They said, *No. They are the inspectorate.* Madam Speaker, I was never so upset in my life! I watch my teachers, the male teachers, the few that we have go to school with neckties. I see the teachers they go in looking professional. And these people come down to inspect and they are in dresses ready to go to the beach, or these little casual dresses that you would wear going to the beach, they keep your swimsuit . . . and slippers! This is what comes to inspect our schools. What a level of respect and professionalism! But how much control do we have over them? I'll ask the Minister afterward.

We hear about no money, Madam Speaker. But they could hire a project manager to complete the former Cayman Islands High School. Yet, we all saw the petition from the Savannah PTA. We have heard the Member for North Side cry for his school. You have heard the Member from East End cry for his school. Another wonderful piece, help our teachers and students with a \$14,000 piece of equipment to ID fingers or something for teachers coming into school. But yet, our children want for teachers, for equipment, for resources, everything.

I want to take my hat off to the Member for East End who into the special education needs. And I want to say a special thank you to the 10 parents of the special education needs group that meet with me and have helped to guide me with this last year when the Minister of Finance allowed me those 19 questions. It opened up—that's right—21 with 3 supplements. It opened a big can of worms, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, does the Department of Education and the Ministry of Education really and truly understand the difference between education prob-

lems and mental health problems? Because, Madam Speaker, I don't think so. When there is no facility on the Island to assist a child with mental health needs, you ask, Madam Speaker, who is responsible for selecting the correct facility to meet this child's needs? Who is then responsible to monitor the child's progress? Like I said, this is all first-hand stuff from parents.

Madam Speaker, something happened the other day. I have a friend who I played football against in Portland, Oregon. He is moved all over the United States and he works in an institute. He hit me on Facebook and he said: *I have one of your girls here from the Cayman Islands.* He said: *But she should not be here.* Sure enough, a few months later, she was back home. Madam Speaker, the child was then sent to another institution where she was raped. We didn't hear anything about that. [She] came back home and the bad part about it is that the child does not even have good parents to deal with it either. This child's life is a living mess because the parents do not have much use. I'm trying to find out who is responsible, like I said. Who decides where they go to? Who monitors them? I hear everybody passing the buck—the Department of Education Services, Department of Children and Family Services, everybody is passing the buck, nobody wants to accept responsibility. The child was in the hospital here under suicide watch.

Madam Speaker, do you know that when certain young people graduate from the Lighthouse, at a certain age, they only have Sunrise to go to as the next step and if they are not a certain age, they have to wait. Then what happens to some of those? They get in trouble and the police arrest some of these and they are not trained to deal with people with these types of problems. [They] have them in cells locked up with handcuffs. This is what is going on, Madam Speaker. And I got the parent's names, place of work, I got everything right here. This is too much of a horror story. Grisham couldn't make this up.

Madam Speaker, the quality of people. . . the Deputy Governor and I had a discussion about this one time. I'm going to say it now loud and clear. Madam Speaker, let's say I wanted to open a business in the field of psychology or speech and language therapy, or anything in that area. I have to go through the Council for Professions Allied with Medicine, called CPAM, here in Cayman; very good organisation, which I agree with. And when I talk to experts in other countries, they say it is the right setup. Now, to obtain a licence to work locally and practice here, I have to have a licence or a registration for the country where I come from. Good again. But why does this not apply to people who work in Government? We have people in those types of positions in Government that do have a licence or registration, even one in the HSA. All of that mental health is why I asked the question earlier on. Does the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education really and truly understand the

difference between educational problems and mental health problems? Because some of the people they have looking out for our children do not have a licence or a registration.

Madam Speaker, we hear about the Government being cash-strapped. We hear that the CIHS—because I still call it that since there is nothing there except bush—work will soon start. I heard that from the Minister today. But keep in mind, Madam Speaker, that I think it is only the gym. I hope I'm wrong, but from what I understood, it is only the gym. Madam Speaker, if we can't build badly needed schools, if we can't supply the existing schools with badly needed resources, as we have seen with the petition from the Savannah PTA, we have a problem; a major problem, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was even more shocked when a recent bipartisan trip on which I was invited to view a new school system, was cancelled. This trip was because of an invitation by a majority Caymanian consortium that wanted to build schools in Cayman and bring possibly two types of new schools to our shores. They wanted 25 people from all walks of life in Cayman to visit to see the schools in action, and to see whether they wanted them here, or whether they could work in Cayman. In speaking to the consortium, they were shocked by the decision not to send people to see [how] the school was made up.

Madam Speaker, why would we not want to encourage the building of schools, or to even complete that one in West Bay? Madam Speaker, they could have built schools in George Town, complete the one in West Bay, where the Minister is from, in Savannah and Bodden Town. Especially at a time when it seems we can't afford to do it as a country, we could have had these people to do it.

Madam Speaker, we need leadership who puts our children first, giving them the best opportunities to excel. Madam Speaker, we need to have partners in education and to think outside the box. Madam Speaker, I wait with bated breath on all those wonderful things I heard the Minister talk about today. But, Madam Speaker, it seems as if no one wants to accept a few facts. These problems did not start since the Minister got there. I've been here for three years and every time I pulled that away from her foot. I haven't tried to play politics and say it is her fault. But on many occasions, Madam Speaker, I have spoken to the Minister, I have spoken to the Deputy Governor, and yes, some of those in the past that have been identified have been moved on. But the main culprits of the cut and paste, and the main culprits of giving us curriculums that have failed our country, and failed our children, are still inside there walking up and down and still making decisions and they can't seem to be touched.

I have said, Madam Speaker, that being Caymanian is not a qualification. But being white, be-

ing Canadian, or being English is also not a qualification.

[Crosstalk]

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, why is it not obvious that these same people that have been there two or three ministries [ago], are still there and being allowed to make decisions?

Madam Speaker, I've said it before and I'm saying it again, some of the greatest cut-and-paste kings and queens, work in that Ministry. A perfect example: Levelling has been deemed a failure in the UK and has been discontinued, and is being continued here in the Cayman Islands; one of the many failures of things that we have copied and brought here to our country that our children, my children, are suffering.

Now, Madam Speaker, let us go into the workforce of what our Caymanians have to go through. I took a young lady from West Bay, and believe, you me, HR people in this country are fed up with me. I drive them there and I wait. I help them fill out their résumés. I help them fix up everything. I took a young lady who is bilingual. [She] has two kids. [She] was working at an establishment where she was that when the owner would go away, he would put her in charge, handled the cash, handled the orders, everything. I took her to one of our fast food places here in the Cayman Islands. She is interviewed by an expat who has about 10 of his family members working in that company. And, Madam Speaker, here is the question: *What are you looking for, a job or a career?* The answer was so beautiful—*For me to get a career, I've got to have a job. Please give me the job.* [He asked] *Do you want a job or do you want a career?* I told her to record it. I gave her the little recorder and she recorded it. And Madam Speaker, she said, *If you give me the job, I might have a career. I have two children to feed, I need a job.* She was not even called, and she is bilingual [with] good references.

The place where she worked closed which was a small business, and as usual what happened in the last three years, a lot of small businesses disappear. This was one of them. I decided, *Let me run a test.* I took a school girl who is in UCCI [University College of the Cayman Islands] to the same place and she had a job in a week. Why? You don't have to worry about pension. You don't have to worry about health insurance, and all those things are cut out.

Madam Speaker, businesses are making people redundant. Then turn around and especially if they know they have a mortgage, and they have a family, telling them they can have the job back, it is a different job, but when the people start to work it is a lower salary, but the same work and sometimes more. That's what is happening to our people, Madam Speaker. People go in and you hear this stupid statement, *You are overqualified.*

*Hire me, you don't have to train me if I am over qualified. I just want a job to be able to help myself up. I don't want to go to Social Services.*

Madam Speaker, it is high time that we pass legislation in this place to take simple things off of people's police records. We have a man in West Bay, when he was 19 years old, he is now 55. When he was 19 he had incident with a spliff, and last year, Madam Speaker, the man had a heart attack and couldn't be flown to the USA. He had to be taken to Jamaica because of a record that was done in 1978 or 1979.

Madam Speaker, back to my favourite friend, the Deputy Governor. When the two Members from that corner up there brought the motion with the Commissioner, the Deputy Governor stood up there and he beat us like a bunch of red-head children that are from outside the family. But totally off the topic that we never discussed, a lot of people on this talked about it but no one said anything but I will.

Madam Speaker, the police, I read in this and I read in the newspaper and this is how I know there is no common sense someplace in the hierarchy. Everything showed that the country had lost confidence in [Commissioner] Baines. They put in the newspaper that they bring two more men, who Baines employed. Now, people out there are saying, *Oh, my God. He brought them; they are going to be just like him.* And I have a bet with some people that one of them will soon be commissioner. But in the Governor's thing, she said this new commissioner, whoever it is, would do this and [she] would give them a heads up on what they have to work on. They have to work on the racism! And the nepotism that is in the police force!

A perfect example: We have a young Caymanian, got in the police force and had a party down at Treasure Island; two or three o'clock in the morning, private party, he and his friends. The police happened to be coming in and his girlfriend gets upset and slaps him and he pushes her in the pool. The next day they had that young man in there signing a letter of resignation; young, bright Caymanian. I won't call out his name. Good young man. His father is one of those people who have had a lot to do with conservation in this country over the years.

Yet in South Sound an English couple in the police force, or the man who was in the special branch, used to carry guns and so forth, and his wife has a big fight, mashes up their apartment, the people next door . . . when the police came, he kicked his fellow policeman. And they were drunk. Next morning he was out there with his guns and stuff, not a bit of trouble. Yet, our Caymanian. . .

Another example: We had some working in Brac and Little Cayman, they falsified the records. The inspector told me so. Said they were in Cuba. Said they were here, well, they were in Cuba. Came back, *whoosh*, promoted. That's what's wrong in the police force.

We have Caribbean officers who tell us, tell me, that they have been in the station and these are the new other ones that they bring over from England, they don't even salute, they don't show no courtesy, no respect, walk in—don't speak—walk out. And they are allowed to do it.

A perfect example of how these police have to wake up. We have a top lawyer in this country who helped both parties at times sit on boards; an IT manager who is a PPM supporter. We have a business owner. These are the type of people who are organising car races, Madam Speaker. They were allowed one over by the Farmer's Market and the Smith Road Cricket Field last year sometime. It went off well. They want to do one in West Bay. The committee sat with two police officers, went through everything, beautiful security, ambulance services—everything that could be covered, organised. Why are they organising this, Madam Speaker? It is because some of the young drivers who have cars are jealous of the fact, as stupid as it may sound, of what the guys on the motorcycles are doing, and they want something similar. So they are trying to get them off the street, get them in an organised manner and telling them, *If you are a part of this, you can't be caught with a speeding ticket, you can't be doing this.* And they said, *Yes, we'll agree to it. But get us some place where once a month or something, we can go and do something like this.* Go to the police, and guess what? After two police officers who have been there for a long while, worked with them, set everything up, and now all of a sudden it gets to the top brass, and here we go again, that gold command; should be bronze because it doesn't shine at all. And now they are telling them no. No!

Madam Speaker, that report on the missing family. A lot of people wanted us to go after the Deputy Governor, and like I told the Deputy Governor, *Not at all! He only dropped it off.* It had nothing to do with him, Madam Speaker. I want the country to know that. He stood there and he may have apologised, but he is apologising for his boss. And I'm not [going to] make my fellow Caymanians stop and take blame for something he is not responsible for. I push enough on him.

Madam Speaker, the Deputy Governor and I had a talk the day that they brought us to speak about the Civil Service College. And I want to say, respect to you, congratulations, it is good. But exactly what I told him would happen, has happened with one Caymanian. My question to him was: "When we bring people on contracts or we hire people from overseas, are they not supposed to be qualified?" So my question is this: Why isn't that Civil Service College only for Caymanian civil servants? Because every expat that comes in from outside is supposed to come in qualified. What we do, we allow them to go into the college so they got more qualifications and they got the experience. Here comes the Caymanian, guess that much, but they can't move because, you know, you know we



are going to him up above because he is brown-nosing somebody up above, so they are going to keep him and no Caymanian is moving up. And a lot of people think that way, Mr. Manderson. And it has happened on one case where the Caymanian could not move because somebody who went to that Civil Service College, who is not a Caymanian, got a qualification and now the Caymanian can't move up because they got the experience. Think that over, Mr. Deputy Governor.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, I noticed something in the tourism that I can't figure out and hopefully my great friend, the man from the East, can explain this to me. I looked at the figures and it said that in two years we made over \$42 million in tourist accommodation tax—\$42 million. But for the 18-month period this budget that we have here is only showing us \$24 million. Are we going to assume in the last six months, \$18 million will be made? So, this is something that has me wondering very hard, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one thing must be said, that the former Premier, the now Leader of the Opposition, when he had the helm, plenty of times the country was broke, but he went out and found money for educational products. Madam Speaker, it is time for our work permit boards to get their stuff together. When you see ads in the newspaper. . . oh, and let us get to that newspaper, because I am going to take this one away from the Deputy Governor as well. Because to let him know, he may not have heard this, we stood there and heard the Premier talk about the *Compass* being treasonous. And we do this and moved the motion to take it away. Now, when we saw them back there, I asked him, *How? Oh, it's the Deputy Governor's decision.* That is what is being said, Deputy Governor, just in case. But if that is so, then we understand why he was doing the PR work for the commissioner.

Madam Speaker, today the good Lord works in mysterious ways and I sat in the side room there and the Minister of Finance came in and I asked him about a purchase agreement and when you make a purchase agreement with someone, what is it that you are supposed to do. Madam Speaker, the purchase agreement details the outputs that the Cabinet of the Cayman Islands Government and the Cayman Islands Athletic Association has agreed that the Cayman Islands Athletic Association deliver, and the Cabinet will purchase during the 2015/16 Financial Year. And I looked at the description:

**“To provide an avenue for all persons living in the Cayman Islands to participate in local track and field activities including but not limited to road races/marathon and organized CIAA meets which could lead to participating in internationally**

**recognized track meets sanctioned and approved by IAAF, NACAC, Pan-Am Games, Commonwealth Games, Islands Games and ultimately Olympics.**

**“Sports program to include the following components:**

- “• Talent Identification,**
- “• Coaches development,**
- “• Increased grassroots participation,**
- “• Local and International competition**
- “• Athlete training and development.”**

Not once did I see salaries, but yet, when I get the financials for the Athletic Association, it says, *Salaries*. Yes, Madam Speaker, but then, this is not the only place. When the cricket international body cut the funds to the [Cayman Islands] Cricket Association, due to that they had to cut some of their funds, some of their junior programmes, and when they asked for help, they were told they had no money. But yet, they were told, and I have a copy of the letter, to submit a request to pay somebody money from a special fund. Madam Speaker, talk about transparency? They want to talk about. . . don't make me, huh.

Madam Speaker, I want to commend the Minister of Sports when he said that they did not tear down the Maple House, *congrats and well done*. Now, I want to say to the Minister for Agriculture, who I believe this may fall under him, I am not sure—there is a building on the West Bay Primary School site that used to be the old Sunrise Centre. I am told it has mould. The special needs people down there need a building. And, Madam Speaker, I would like to arrange a meeting with whoever is responsible to see . . . without tearing down that building, and as we were told, to make a parking lot. And, Madam Speaker, I am going to ask and beg for them to meet with us to see even if we have to take the roof off, bleach it down, and we get our local people to even put back on the roof or whatever. We are sure we can get a crew together. But too many teachers at that school and, especially, the special education needs' section, and the dental staff, and the medical staff have said they would like the building. It could be put to. . . much better than a parking lot.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Don't kill yourself worrying about . . . we'll find monies. It is our district.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** They're broke.

*[Inaudible interjections and crosstalk]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, I would also like the First Elected Member for George Town for his encouraging words, for trying to solve the backlog at

the West Bay Licensing Department and what he said earlier on. Thank you. At times it can be a big crowd down there from all over the Island.

To the Fourth Elected Member for Bodden Town when he spoke about the prisons starting the vocational school, I want to make him know that February the 1<sup>st</sup> (which is my birthday) 2013—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013.

And Hon. Member: You're that young?

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Yes, sir.  
I have it right here.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** At two, three years old.

February the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, at Northward Prison, there was a ceremony and it is also just like how I was able to quiet the great one Baines, when he said I was fabricating, and I put those 20 things up on the web, and said, *Click on this*. And they all said, *Cayman Compass, 2013, zero two zero six*. They all were there, Bernie didn't fabricate anything. I had to . . . just gave them. . . there is your *Compass*, who became your cheerleader. The *Cayman News Service* was the sweetest one: They said Mr. Bush forgot three.

Madam Speaker, 2013, zero two zero six, Prison Vocational Training Centre officially opened. "Vocational training officers completed audit of their training skills, January 20<sup>th</sup> to February 1<sup>st</sup>. Professor Gossett Oliver of City & Guilds Caribbean International conducted the skills audit. The University of the West Indies Cayman Head, Robert Geofroy, conducted a months' intensive certified basic teacher training for vocational training officers, early 2013. City & Guilds Caribbean and Cayman Islands Prison Service engaged in an agreement to provide vocational training certification for training in the Cayman Islands begin to process for full centre certification, March 2013." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE] But the problem was, I think, they never had enough officers. So it is not something new, it is just a restart. Like typical, that's what happens here in Cayman.

Madam Speaker, I want to let the district and the people of West Bay hear the letter that the Leader of the Opposition sent to the Premier.

**"Dear Sir:**

**"Re: Genetically Modified Mosquitos.**

**"I write on behalf of my elected colleagues, the Third Elected Member of the District of West Bay"—**

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, is it your intention to lay it after you read it?

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Yes, Ma'am, no problem.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** "I write on behalf of my elected colleagues, the Third Elected Member of the District of West Bay, Mr. Bernie Bush, and the Fourth Elected Member of the District of West Bay, Captain Eugene Ebanks and myself.

"We have given some more thought to the above subject and we have also listened to the various concerns of constituents on the matter.

"We must therefore ask that the intended project which is being discussed about the placement of millions of modified mosquitos be put on hold until more public discussions and education has been completed and more satisfactory assessment of risk can take place. Our people are very concerned!

"We have given preliminary support from our first meeting with Dr. Petrie and others from the Mosquito and Research Unit, in the absence of any concerns at that time because constituents would not have known intentions of the project then. New questions have now arisen and more public discontent has come to bear.

"There seems to be need for more scientific answers to scientific questions and we must ask for the above position to be adhered to and that is a hold put on the project!

**"Respectfully, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Leader of the Opposition**

**"cc: Mr. Bernie Bush; Captain Eugene Ebanks"**

Madam Speaker, I just want, in closing—

*[Crosstalk]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Madam Speaker, before I start on the next page, would you like to take a break and call it that for the night and I could finish it off in the morning?

**The Speaker:** At this time we will take our afternoon break.

Can I just get an indication whether we are going beyond 7:00 pm tonight?

Honourable Deputy Premier?

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Speaker:** I am asking that because I—

**The Deputy Premier, Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell:** No, Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** —in the innuendo that two other persons were going to speak tonight and we go into Fi-

nance Committee. That is what the Premier said and I want to find out whether that has changed.

**The Deputy Premier, Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell:** Madam Speaker, once this gentleman has—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Deputy Premier, Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell:** Once this speaker is finished, we will adjourn for the evening and come back tomorrow morning.

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Speaker:** In that case, then the Member who is now on the floor is asking for a break, so we will entertain a break at this time.

**Proceedings suspended at 6:58 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 7:29 pm**

**APPROPRIATION (JULY 2016 TO DECEMBER 2017) BILL, 2016**

**DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS AND THE THRONE SPEECH TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY STATEMENT**

*[Continuation of debate thereon]*

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.  
Proceedings are resumed.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Third Elected Member for the district of West Bay.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.  
Madam Speaker, I bring attention to the *Cayman Compass*, Wednesday, June the 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

**The Speaker:** I am informed that you have 40 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Thank you, Ma'am. I won't keep the Members that long.

Madam Speaker, we need to know who is monitoring and who is doing what in the Government because I look in this newspaper and I see \$5.00 per hour, plus benefits, being advertised. I look down the page and I see salary, \$800.00 per month. Madam Speaker, we just heard where the \$6.00 minimum was passed, and you have people advertising \$5.00 an hour. Somebody advertising \$800.00 a month, when you do the mathematics, 8 hours a day, \$6.00 an hour, is \$48.00 [a day]. You take that times 6 days for the week, barber and beauty salon, it should \$960.00.

It is right there. People are being blatant and they are not following the law.

Madam Speaker, getting back to what is happening to our children: We have a major issue. We have Caymanian students who are in private schools whom Government subsidises, by paying \$90,000 every year. When you combine it, it comes to \$90,000K each year.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Yes. Yes.

These private schools are excluding Caymanian children for learning disabilities even where the [parents] are willing to pay. We are giving them \$90,000 a year, and when you have a child who might have a slight disability, they are turning to them and saying, *You have to find someplace else for your child*. Some of these kids are being excluded for being behind in two subjects. Madam Speaker, we give them the \$90,000K to accommodate our kids, why don't we take that money and put it into a specialty school where we can properly diagnose and deal with our own Caymanian children?

Madam Speaker, we would rather spend a \$120,000K or more in some instances to send our children away rather than pay for intervention here, or in the private schools. If they are a little slow, Madam Speaker, wouldn't it possibly infringe their human rights to exclude them? They are social issues that come from separating them. They are not learning how to interact and network. They are not getting the cultural exchange and the sports, and all the other things that schools give students. The Minister and this Government must have an answer where Caymanian children are concerned. Madam Speaker, we need a policy. We must have a policy saying that no Caymanian child must be left behind (as the usual saying). We also don't have the space in the public schools. So they can't have their cake and eat it too.

Madam Speaker, I would like to bring to the attention some of the things that were done in education from the last Government. The last Government implemented online web-based STAR rating assessments with all primary school students and CAT, which is the Cognitive Abilities Test, implemented with all primary and high school students. They distributed 30 portable interactive whiteboards to primary and high school classrooms, 2009, 2010, 2011, and I must say the present Government finished off the rest that was done from that time.

Madam Speaker, facilitated online web-based tests. . . (okay, I found it now). . . came with all primary school students and PiE and cap implemented with all primary and high school students 2011, 2012; introduced an iPad pilot at Lighthouse School; implemented national ICT-acceptable use policies for students and teachers, and an ICT-integration policy and strategy; significant upgrades in installation in all schools

and wireless networks. These upgrades were needed to deal with increased ICT demands. Facilities, under the last Government, opened a new Clifton Hunter High School at Frank Sound. The school accommodates nearly 900 children from North Side, East End, and Bodden Town. Launched important new primary school classroom development projects to meet the demand for additional classrooms and administrative spaces; remove modular classrooms and provide the space needed to reintroduce reception classes; opened a new multipurpose hall canteen at East End Primary School.

Madam Speaker, there are quite a few things that it seems people have not mentioned. The last Government completed health checks of education system as follows:

- launched new education stabilisation plan;
- published first progress report on education stabilisation plan;
- developed new governance model for education system;
- established new education policy and planning unit in the Ministry;
- established new key roles of senior school improvement;
- established data unit with the DES;
- established new Principals' Consultative Council;
- established National Professional Standards for teachers;
- implemented and enhanced performance management process for education;
- developed National Education Policy and Priority Area 2010–2000 Level;
- school discipline and student behaviour;
- teaching and learning curriculum; misuse of drugs;
- special education needs;
- code of practice;
- early admissions;
- ICT integration policy and strategy;
- ICT acceptable use for students and teachers;
- introduced the first food health standards for canteens in Government schools;
- established a range of task force committees established to identify solutions and make recommendations to the Ministry;
- scholarships review committee;
- early years task force, principals' consultative committee;
- at-risk strategic planning team;

- business studies advisory committee; literature advisory committee;
- teacher performance management review task force;
- graduation requirements committee; data advisory committee;
- education law revision taskforce;
- national standards for principals advisory group;
- conducted the first stakeholder review on education issues in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman;
- developed national professional standards for teachers in Cayman Islands;
- implemented enhanced graduation criteria for Government high schools introducing academic criteria and three-tiered diploma system;
- implemented a revised and enhanced teacher recruitment policy and process; and
- conducted a consultancy review of the education standards and assessment units.

Madam Speaker, also, which you were part of the last Government, the restructuring of secondary education:

- staffed and structured through Year 7-11 high schools in Grand Cayman;
- replacing the former Middle High School structure;
- launched a new Year 12 programme at the new Cayman Islands Further Education Centre providing new learning opportunities for all abilities through a foundation programme for resits;
- a dual-entry programme for A Level at private schools;
- TVET programme with a range of VTEC courses;
- established a dual-entry programme at UCCI; and
- an increase of students gaining five or more O'level equivalent passes from 37 per cent to 49 per cent.

Madam Speaker, special education needs:

- expanded provision at the Lighthouse School with the addition of two classrooms and additional staffing;
- provided every Government school with access to SEN specialty staff with priority for direct speech and language and occupational therapy provided for younger students;
- launched highly successful music therapy programme at Lighthouse

- School's early intervention programmes and the Sunrise Adult Training Centre;
- introduced a transition classroom to serve Year 1 students who would have otherwise required that their special education needs be met at the Lighthouse School;
  - introduced new autism diagnostic services and training for teachers and health care workers;
  - introduced new counselling service for students who are victims of sexual abuse;
  - provided training for Government mental health professionals in trauma-based cognitive behaviour therapy through a successful bid for private sector funding;
  - relocated the early intervention programmes to more spacious premises with dedicated administrative space and therapy rooms;
  - developed new website for all schools; completed computer lab upgrades; new PCs for all primary schools and John Gray Schools;
  - provided new iMac Apple computer lab for CIFEC creative media and Clifton Hunter design and technology;
  - continued support for laptop for teacher's programme including laptops for new teachers and replacements, evergreen of oldest teachers' laptops, approximately 100 laptops; and
  - opened four new primary school buildings in Bodden Town, Savannah, George Town, and West Bay, plus two new classrooms at the Layman E. Scott High School in the Brac.

Madam Speaker, in wrapping up, the first day I arrived in here the First Elected Member for George Town called me across and gave me some advice. Then it was the Elected Member for East End, he gave me some more advice. Then the First Elected Member for Bodden Town called me over and gave me the best advice. And this is the anniversary of being three years here, and Madam Speaker, I've tried very hard to carry myself in such a way that those three men would say that I took good advice.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition told me, *We will not be bad Opposition. We will be good Opposition. If something is good, we agree with it. If it is not good, we ask questions.* It was so nice to hear someone call on the radio and say that they are happy that all of the arguments that used to go on don't seem to go on anymore. And my only answer was *because we don't argue unnecessarily.*

Madam Speaker, it is with a heavy heart today that I had to say some of the things that I said, but they needed to be said. I will ask no forgiveness; I am not asking anyone to. . . and I will not take back anything I've said when it comes to what is happening with our children. *We keep saying they are the future,* but yet for some reason the feeling is there that we are short-changing them. We have to get our system back that every one of us in here would send our children to the schools, not sending them to all private schools. Madam Speaker, I do, like what the Leader of the Opposition said, wish the Government well because if they fail, we fail. We want them to succeed because it is for the good of the Cayman Islands.

To the Leader of the Opposition, we have not agreed on everything. You have allowed me to be myself and I want to say thank you for your guidance and at times reprimanding me.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Bernie A. Bush:** Oh, yes, he has. On that Throne Speech, if it wasn't for him on that Throne Speech the other day you would have seen something, but his calmness and leadership made me behave.

Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you to you for your notes, your guidance, and your patience. To my teammates on this side, it has been a pleasure. To the guys up in the back here, it has also been a pleasure. Thank you all for everything. And to the people of West Bay and to the people of Cayman Islands, keep on calling, keep on texting, keep on dropping information in the back of the truck. That is why I got a truck, because I know that information couldn't fit on a car windshield. You put me here to do a job; to be a watchdog and to be fair, and I will do that while I am here. Thank you all very much and have a good night.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Premier.

## ADJOURNMENT

**The Premier, Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I move the adjournment of this Honourable House until 10:00 am tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The question is that this Honourable House be adjourned until 10:00 am tomorrow.

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

**AYES.**

**The Speaker:** The Ayes have it.

**At 7:46 pm the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016.**

*[This page intentionally left blank]*