



CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Requests to Finance Committee July 2021 for Appropriation Changes Sought Under Section 12 of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision)

**FOR THE YEAR ENDING
31st DECEMBER 2021**

PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 12
OF THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE ACT
(2020 REVISION)

**JULY 2021 SCHEDULE OF APPROPRIATION CHANGES
UNDER SECTION 12 OF THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE ACT
(2020 REVISION), WITH RESPECT TO THE FINANCIAL YEAR
ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2021**

Verbatim transcript of the Standing Finance Committee meeting held Monday, 19 July 2021, at 9:12am in the Chamber of the House of Parliament, George Town, Grand Cayman.

Present: Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, MP, *Chairman*
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP
Hon. Hon Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MP
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP
Hon. Johany S. "Jay" Ebanks, MP
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, JP, MP
Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, MP
Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP
Mr. Joseph X. Hew, MP
Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MP
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, JP, MP
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP

Absent: Mr. David C. Wight, JP, MP

Witnesses: Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS)
Mrs. Zena Merren-Chin, Chief Officer of the Parliament Management Commission
Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure
Mr. Wesley Howell, Chief Officer, Ministry of Border Control and Labour
Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways
Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education

[EDITORIAL NOTE: Undertakings are reported in [blue text](#) for ease of reference]

[Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Chairman, presiding]

The Chairman: Good morning everyone. The Committee is called to order.

As is customary in Finance Committee, I will call on the Minister for Investment, Innovation and Social Development—the Member for West Bay South—to lead us in prayer.

PRAYER

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Investment, Innovation and Social Development: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Let us bow our heads and close our eyes and pray to the Lord and God above to show this Committee wisdom today as we deal with and are entrusted with public funds; to utilise those funds wisely, to vote and

discuss in collaboration in the best interest of the country forward.

May God grant us wisdom and accuracy to help the people of the Cayman Islands; we humbly pray. Amen.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. You may be seated.

Good morning, Honourable Members of the Committee. We have a quorum and can commence this meeting. The quorum of Finance Committee is ten members excluding myself as Chairman of the Committee. The purpose of this meeting of Finance Committee is to consider items shown on the hard copy material that was Tabled in the House on Thursday, July 15th and has been distributed to all Honourable Members.

The Committee's approval for this supplementary expenditure is being sought under Section 12 of the Public Management and Finance Act (PMFA). Honourable Members will recall that such a procedure was last done in June 2019. Given that the Government must conclude Finance Committee's proceeding today, I ask for Members' usual cooperation in asking their questions promptly and not make long introductory remarks before stating their question.

Using the first item on the schedule before the Committee as an example, when it comes to taking a vote on an item on the Finance Committee schedule, I shall ask Members' position by posing a question: "All those in favour of supplementary expenditure with respect to CBO 17 - Government Communication Services for an amount of \$199,371 being approved pursuant to Section 12(2) of the PMFA, please say Aye; those against, No."

Honourable Members of the Committee will quite rightly ask, *what are the financial impacts of these requests?* Honourable Members taking into account that:

1. The 2020 Supplementary Operating Expenditure Requests now before the Committee total \$68,673,239;
2. The 2021 Supplementary Capital Investment and Capital Expenditure Requests now before the Committee total \$27,470,128;
3. Other 2021 Operating Supplementary Expenditures for the 2021 Financial Year that have been approved by the current and previous Cabinet using the procedure allowed by Section 11(5) of the PMFA, that total \$37,985,619; and
4. Other 2021 Supplementary Capital Investment and Capital Expenditure for the 2021 Financial Year that have been approved by the current and previous Cabinet under section 11(5) of the PMFA that were a net reduction/negative of \$5,153,327

Then we can expect that:

1. There will be a small operating deficit of approximately \$60 million for Central Government for the current 2021 Financial Year that will end on 31st December 2021;
2. A debt service ratio of 6.5 per cent for 2021 Financial Year which is well below the 10 per cent maximum limit;
3. Cash balances of approximately \$479 million are expected and at such level of cash balance would provide 179 days of expenditure coverage, which would be robustly in excess of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) required minimum of 90 days; and
4. A net debt ratio that is anticipated to be substantially under the ceiling of 80 per cent.

Honourable Members, I can say that none of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) ratios that Government must satisfy—i.e. the debt service ratio, net debt ratio and the cash reserve ratio—are in danger of being non-compliant because of an approval of the supplementary expenditure requests now before this Committee.

I know this is the first Finance Committee of this new Government and as such, I would invite the Honourable Premier, if there are any remarks he would like to make before we take any questions from Members.

Honourable Premier.

[Pause]

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

Just to recognise that this Government obviously understands the significance of Finance Committee and the role that we all play in ensuring that the peoples' money is being appropriately spent and allocated to serve the best interests of the people and the country. I will ask all Members to bear that in mind and that we act accordingly in making our decisions and considering our positions and perspectives.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Premier. Honourable Members, we're starting on page 3 of the Appropriation Schedule.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town East: Sorry. Good morning Mr. Chairman. Just one quick question before we get into it, for clarity's sake.

The supplementary budget—do I understand that the figures are included in the forecasts that are in this SPS?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Perfect. Yes.

The Chairman: Yes, Mr. Leader, those figures are included in the forecast.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Okay.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE PREMIER

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: CABINET OFFICE

CBO 17 — GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The Chairman: Thank you.

Honourable Members, we're starting on page 3 of the Appropriation Schedule: CBO 17, Government Communication Services and the section 12 request is \$199,371.

Are there any questions?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town North: Mr. Chairman, this is CIG TV—is this new equipment? Is that what I am to understand?

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair, give me a second just to confer.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Sorry, Mr. Chair; actually it's the next one EI 36, that says "new equipment". My apologies.

The Chairman: Okay, that's fine; we'll save that question.

Any other questions with regards to CBO 17—Government Communication Services?

Okay with no other question, I will ask: All those in favour of an additional \$199,371 of expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to CBO 17—Government Communication Services being approved, please say, Aye; those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Appropriations for CBO 17 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EI 36 — CABINET OFFICE

The Chairman: Moving on to the next one on page 3, EI 36, Cabinet Office, a \$400,000 section 12 request. Are there any questions?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Just to clarify: it says "New Equipment".

Is this equipment for CIG TV or equipment in the Cabinet Office or... Could the Member offer some explanation, please?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could I ask the Member to restate his question?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Certainly.

Can the Member please clarify whether this is new equipment for CIG TV or new equipment within the Cabinet Office? Could they clarify what the spending is for?

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair I believe it is in relation to CIG TV.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair, just to add that this is specifically in relation to adding a server and redoing the media room for CIG TV.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman; you can go to the vote.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

All those in favour of an additional \$400,000 expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to EI 36—Cabinet Office, please say Aye; those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Appropriations for EI 36 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE PREMIER ON BEHALF OF THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

OCP 1 — CRIME PREVENTION AND PROTECTION SERVICES

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Moving on to page 4, OCP 1—Crime Prevention and Protection Services for \$1,701,793. Are there any questions?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: It would be, I guess, might go to for OCP 1, 2 and 3—wherever it's relevant, you can answer it there.

In view of recent gun crimes, are there enough funds for any new programme or interventions dealing with the situation—or is there a need for any funds?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair, let me confer with my colleagues for a second.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair, I would ask permission for the Commissioner to respond specifically to the question.

The Chairman: Permission granted.

Commissioner, welcome and good morning.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members of Parliament. Just to give a summary—

The Chairman: Sorry, Commissioner before you start, can you just give your name and title for the record.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you, Mr. Chair. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police.

So just to answer the question Mr. Chairman. While we are in a very challenging environment at the moment, we do have a committee established under the Deputy Governor to deal with gangs. It is an anti-gang strategy and we will be meeting shortly. As it stands at the moment, we are doing well, operationally. We may have to come back to speak about resources, but we will know more when we have our first meeting with the Deputy Governor shortly.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Chairman, I know that the Commissioner gave a report to members; I was not available for that meeting. If possible, can he say whether the recent situation was, or is, a gang situation?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have given a report to the National Security Council and indeed, to Members of Parliament. We would say we are dealing with three disparate groups in George Town Central, West Bay and a younger

group of next generation persons involved in criminality, so there is a gang element to it. More disorganised groups, loosely associated young persons, predominantly male with intersperse of some young females involved, supporting them in terms of logistics.

We are making good progress. We do have some challenges, in terms of getting information from the community, but generally we're doing quite well in terms of our investigations. We have to monitor the situation going forward; it is serious, not to be underestimated. It will require a lot of resilience and constant focus going forward.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Chairman, can the Commissioner say, if this is not a particular group, whether they are getting sufficient information to know why or how? We know how—we see the shootings— but is it drugs or some other crime element, why this is happening?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Chairman, thank you. It's a multiplicity of factors we have identified, it has to do with territory, hierarchy, guns, drugs, conflict, females and males. It's a wide mix of issues. The smallest conflict can escalate and result in an issue with gun crime, so it is a multiplicity of issues. We are picking up information; the difficulty is trying to convert that to evidence to prosecute people. That is a challenge.

The Chairman: Thank you. I recognise the Honourable Leader of Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Through you Mr. Chairman, to the Member. We are looking here for \$1.7 million in OCP 1, the description is COVID-19 Expenditure; I suspect that the majority of this will be for overtime payments but can we get some further clarity on any other matters that might be included in this number?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Yes. Thank you, Chairman.

The general description of the breakdown of the total global figure of \$2,834,612 [sic] [\$2,834,613] is:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Personnel Costs—overtime | \$1,400,845 |
| Personnel Costs in the Honorarium—unbudgeted | \$659,000 |
| Vehicle Expenses | \$281,045 |
| Building Expenses | \$182,037 |

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Special Constabulary Honorarium and Ex-gratia Payment | \$114,500 |
| Office and Computer Expenses | \$110,967 |
| Hospitality and Dietary Supplies | \$46,703 |
| Personnel Related Costs | \$21,242 |
| Other Supplies and Consumables | \$18,274 |
| Total | \$2,834,612 |

The Chairman: Thank you.

The Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, Elected Member for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman to the Commissioner, I will encompass a couple of these to save some time because they relate to police votes and crime. There's been quite a bit of input, requests and conversation with issues in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, directly with the Commissioner through the chains of command; I just want a reassurance from the Commissioner that we are included and some of the issues that have been brought to the attention are being looked into and we hope will shortly be actioned.

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I can say we are watching Cayman Brac and indeed the Sister Islands very, very closely. We have a new District Manager over there, Inspector Yearwood, we are working very closely with him in terms of upskilling our personnel. We have done some aerial support deployments over there and we are working towards additional marine asset deployment over in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. We are watching things very closely in the Sister Islands.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Mr. Commissioner and Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you. Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister for Tourism and Transport, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Through you Mr. Chairman: Commissioner, earlier you referred to George Town Central; just for clarity, can you specify that that's not a political area as

opposed to generalising that it is in George Town in its totality?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Yeah, to clarify that, it's certainly not a political zone that I'm speaking about, it is just a geographical zone—Martin's Drive, Seymour Drive; in that particular area. Two bars we are concerned about in there, I think I've highlighted at NSC and at Parliament. There is a particular geographic area that our criminal activity seems to be zoned in on. The scenario that we're concentrating on.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair; thank you, Commissioner. As you said, you have met with the Members of Parliament, just for the public's sake, do you have any intentions of increasing either cameras or police presence in these areas?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you Chairman.

We have had significant additional patrols over the last month; actually since April, May, and June, and we will continue that right into the future until we can get this matter controlled and believe that we are in a controlled environment. However, I think I have indicated that it is a challenging period for the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service and it will be for the foreseeable future, so yes, there will be additional patrols in those areas and indeed other areas. Generally, we have to adopt an intelligence-led approach wherever that intelligence takes us.

The Chairman: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Commissioner.

Commissioner, you gave a figure of somewhere in the region of \$1.4 million and change with regard to overtime. Is that for work overtime already completed or is this an estimate for the remainder of the year?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

This relates to unbudgeted overtime incurred at the height of COVID across the Islands enforcing a range of duties, whether it was curfew, shelter-in-place,

minding quarantine facilities, vehicle checkpoints across the Island, a multitude of issues over multiple months unbudgeted and has been expended.

The Chairman: Sorry, just for clarity, Commissioner.

Is this a situation where funds for 2021 were carried into 2020 and now we are replenishing the 2021 funding? Is that in essence what it is?

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Effectively Chairman, it was unbudgeted expenditure that we incurred during COVID; that, and the other issues that have been identified, bringing it to a total of \$2,834,612 is overtime that had to be incurred looking at the safety and security of the Cayman Islands and the mandate of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chairman: Mr. Leader.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, sir. Through you to the Commissioner.

Commissioner, in the environment in which we are operating now, are you incurring significant overtime in terms of COVID related matters?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Chairman, thank you.

As it stands now, we are minimising our COVID-related over time but we are still minding quarantine facilities which is unbudgeted expenditure for RCIPS which will have to be dealt with at a later stage and that runs in the region of \$80,000 per month.

The Chairman: Mr. Leader.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman thank you so much, sir.

I am just thinking that if we know that these additional expenditures are coming due, would it make sense for us to approve the additional amount through to the end of the year here or put an estimate in?

The Commissioner suggested \$80,000 a month. It seems perfectly logical to me to do so, sir.

The Chairman: Commissioner, what are your thoughts?

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): My thoughts are that would be very helpful, but I think there's probably a number of inter-dependent issues, in terms of border re-opening and whether quarantine facilities remain in place; but that is a really helpful suggestion in terms of giving some certainty to the RCIPS in terms of its operating environment.

The Chairman: Mr. Leader, what you suggested makes sense and I think it is definitely something that we can directly look at.

I know this is what was approved in Cabinet before on a first request, but definitely as we get closer to the budget that is something we can probably look at, to see exactly what it comes down to.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: So you are suggesting, sir, that we just leave it for now?

The Chairman: Correct, because more than likely we are going to end up with another Finance Committee probably around September or so. This should be enough funds to at least carry them through to that period and if anything else pops up, we will deal with it then.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Okay; I'm just thinking because he just said that this is for all incurred already.

The Chairman: What I understand is that a lot of the spending that is required now is part of the budget that we approved from 2021 was carried to 2020 already, so now it's just a matter of trying to replenish what 2021 should have been. That's part of the whole two-year budget cycle where you can move money forward and I think this is a situation where the money was moved forward and now we're just trying to put it back for 2021. The total is almost \$3 million for the three votes that are actually here.

The Chairman: Member for West Bay West, you had a question.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Yes.

Mr. Chairman, I want to get back to the matter of the gun violence. Does the Commissioner know, obviously, at least from videos, it is very high-powered guns being used, is there knowledge of the importation of these guns that we haven't heard about before, nor seen in action before, at least not from the public standpoint; is the police service aware of the importation points?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police (RCIPS): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Yes, we have some information in terms of the travel routes coming in through domestic appliances and furniture through imports and we are working with director of CBC and his team there to deal with this. We have information that a number of firearms are on Island for a number of years—the exact number we don't know—but in recent incidents since January of this year, we have nine different firearms used in various

commissions of crime. We know that two of those are high-powered weapons and the rest are handgun 9-millimetre, .40-type weapons.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Obviously Mr. Chairman, these matters are being dealt with in Security Council?

The Chairman: Commissioner.

Mr. Derek Byrne, Commissioner of Police: Yes Chairman, I can say for certain that they're being dealt with at the National Security Council.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Any questions for the Commissioner on OCP 1? Sorry, the Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair thank you. I would suggest a block vote because I think all of these questions would probably be associated with criminal element. Most of those have been asked, so I wonder if the Opposition would be mindful to do so.

The Chairman: Mr. Leader is the Opposition mindful to take the remaining vote in block?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I have no objections, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

BLOCK-VOTE

OCP 1, OCP 2, OCP 3, AND OCP 4

The Chairman: Thank you Members; we are just going to block-vote the next four:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| OCP 1 Crime Prevention and Protection Services | \$1,701,793 |
| OCP 2 Crime Investigation and Licensing Service | \$457,835 |
| OCP 3 Policy Advice, Administrative and Support Services | \$609,097 |
| OCP 4 Maritime Security, Search and Rescue, Border Control, and Disaster Response Management | \$65,887 |

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

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: OCP 1, OCP 2, OCP 3 and OCP 4 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Members, I have just been made to understand that there are some items for the Parliament that require funding, so while we are still under the Office of the Premier, we ask for those items to be dealt with.

At this point I will ask the Clerk to pass around the schedule, which has been signed.

[Pause]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, can I have a copy of whatever it is that we are considering?

The Chairman: It is being distributed. I will give Members enough time to digest it, because I just got it myself.

[Long pause]

The Chairman: Members while we are waiting, for the record, this was previously approved in Cabinet in February, and the amounts are included in the forecast for 2021 already.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, this was included in which budget?

The Chairman: It's included in the forecast that we made for 2021, which included the \$16 million deficit for this Financial Year.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: When you say included Mr. Chairman . . .

The Chairman: We are about to get started on that one Mr. Speaker, just hold on; we'll soon get started.

Since this is in essence a change being made at the moment, I invite the Honourable Premier to make a statement on it.

AMENDMENT MOVED BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair thank you very much.

These four items, which will be the subject of an amendment proposed by me as noted previously, were inadvertently left off the previously approved schedule. An approval was given back in February, I think, in relation to these various items. I am not sure how it was left off but, needless to say it was, and it

remains for us to address it at this point; so, with your permission sir, I'm happy to move the amendment.

The Chairman: Alright. Are you going to read the amendment or...?

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

Mr. Chair, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 65, I, the Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, hereby give notice to move the following amendments to the above noted Schedule of Appropriation Changes.

This is in relation to Appropriations to the Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency:

- **Output Group LEA 1 — Servicing of the Parliament and Members of the Parliament**, by introducing and adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to LEA 1 an amount of CI \$116,667;
- **Other Operating Expense OE 5 — Constituency Allowance** by introducing and adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to OEA 5, an amount of CI \$93,333;
- **Other Operating Expense OE 128 — Personal Emoluments for Premier, Deputy Premier, Speaker of the Parliament, Ministers of Cabinet and Elected Members of the Parliament**, by introducing to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to OE 128, an amount of CI \$141,667; and
- **Other Operating Expense OE 130 — Administrative and Advisory Support to Members of the Parliament**, by introducing to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to OE 130 an amount of CI \$175,574.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Premier.

For members and the listening public, please note that even though the Premier is the one who actually carried this Motion forward, it does not mean that the Premier controls the Parliament. It is just that this requires to be moved by a Minister or an Official Member; in this case we just chose the Premier to be the person responsible for it.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY CABINET ON BEHALF OF THE PARLIAMENT

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: PARLIAMENT MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

LEA 1 — SERVICING OF THE PARLIAMENT AND MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT

The Chairman: With that said, I would like to open the floor for LEA 1 — Servicing of the Parliament and Members of the Parliament, an additional \$116,667. Are there any questions?

The Chairman: The Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just for clarity: all of these appropriations were done before this Administration was put in the power, correct?

The Chairman: Before we accepted responsibility. Yes, that is correct.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Chairman—

The Chairman: Sorry Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition had a question just ahead of you. Oh, sorry; The Member for West Bay North. Sorry.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: George Town North.

The Chairman: George Town North. Apologies.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: On the question from the Member for George Town Central, Mr. Chair: Does this include the changes that we made on the constituency allowances in the First Meeting of the Parliamentary Committee?

The Chairman: Actually I would hazard a guess to say no, it does not include it.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Sorry. Any questions with regard to LEA 1, \$116,667?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I should not have to ask this question, but I will.

The Chairman: Ask it then.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: When you are saying here that the funds are for the modifications to the Parliament Staff complement—what are the positions that these modifications will introduce?

The Chairman: The Honourable Premier.

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

Mr. Chair given that the Clerk is the Chief Officer of Parliament, I think it would be appropriate for her to provide the specific clarifications.

The Chairman: I invite the honourable Clerk. Just for the record, Madam Clerk can you state your name and title for the record?

Mrs. Zena Merren-Chin, Chief Officer of the Parliament Management Commission: Zena Merren-Chin, Chief Officer of the Parliament Management Commission.

The increase in relation to the changes to the Parliamentary Staff Complement, due to the autonomy, is the cost for Chief Parliamentary Advisor, there is a salary uplift for the Chief Officer and there is a new position for the Deputy Chief Officer, so the salary was included and an uplift for the Deputy Clerk position as well. Those are the costs that were included.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Again, for the record, Mr. Chairman, I should not have to be asking this, but I will; these Deputy positions ...

Mr. Chairman, I will forgo these because there will be a Management Council Meeting. I am not going to vote and have any grievance with the positions, but I have a grievance with the way it is being done. The Law states that the Presiding Officer is the Manager of this Parliament. Now, we have a new situation, and I give way for all of that, but these discussions have been going on and grievances have been laid about these positions—if the positions are in place that is, I do not know.

I will leave it there, Mr. Chairman, because we will certainly need the funds; it is how we are getting there.

There have been advertisements for these positions and over 30 applications; I have not seen any, I don't know anything about it. All I am hearing is that this has happened. I have not seen any and perhaps if we are going to operate like a Civil Service then the Minister does not see these things, it goes to the Chief Officer, but it's not quite the same as the operations of the Civil Service. While there is, and we will remember that we had these discussions when the Law was passed, that there is a play where the Clerk, who is the Chief Officer, will be acting as a Chief Officer in employment practices, all because we said let us crawl before we walk so, we are not going to say who has been hired or who is not, but we have to take note of certain situations and from my position when we are hiring senior staff as Deputy Clerks then the Presiding Officer (in the Civil Service's case, the Minister), should know something about who is going to be where and I haven't been notified.

I have disagreed because the fact is, that there are numerous applications and we don't want to find

ourselves before the courts because we have not given anybody an opportunity while they have applied; so bear all those things in mind.

We are due to have a Council Meeting soon and those things will hopefully be unravelled and satisfied there, but I want to put it on record.

The Chairman: Thank you very much Honourable Member for West Bay West but I think, for the record, the spirit of the Law was intended that the Chief Officer—similar to the other Chief Officers—would pretty much have the day-to-day operational management of the Parliament as directed by the Parliamentary Management Commission.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Ah!

The Chairman: So I think the day-to-day... Again, this is something that can be dealt with at the Parliamentary Management Commission.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Day-to-day, Mr. Chairman, but understand what the Law says about the Manager. If there is day to day, then the Manager has some oversight and if the Manager is the supervising person for the Chief Officer and he is the person that has to, at the end of the day, write her report, then it didn't go in the discussion that that person is not going to have some oversight of what happens in the Parliament, because that is not correct.

If anyone is under that belief they better check the Law, the discussions and the feelings that happened when we passed the Law.

The Chairman: I think in the same spirit of the Public Authorities Law (PAL) and everything else, I think that the executive authority is invested in the Chief Officer but again, we will take that up at the Parliamentary Management Commission meeting. This is not the forum for that.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Oh, Mr. Chairman when we are passing money, it is quite the forum and especially when the Law says who the Manager is. There has to be some knowledge of what is coming here.

I did not know what was coming here today at all, since I have to say it. Let's put our cards on the table. I don't want to be held responsible; at the end of the day when they come cussing McKeeva, *Oh it wa him! That was that dirty, no-good McKeeva done that.* Oh, yeah? Noo!

The Chairman: Well, the PMC will be held responsible, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: That's right!

The Chairman: Any other questions with regards to LEA 1 in the amount—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, just to ask: Do we know a confirmed date for the next council meeting? For the first one actually.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Second? I apologise. The second.

The Chairman: No, I don't know. Thanks.
All those—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, I suggest we do block vote on this as well, as I do not think there will be any other questions in respect to all the other output numbers.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Member for Town Central and I thank the Honourable Leader of Opposition for agreeing to the block vote.

We will take the next few items in block vote with regards to the Parliament:

- **LEA 1 – Servicing of the Parliament and Members of the Parliament for an increase of \$116,667;**
- **OE 5 – Constituency Allowance, increase by \$93,333;**
- **OE 128 – Personal Emoluments for the Premier, Deputy Premier, Speaker of the Parliament, Ministers of Cabinet, Elected Members of the Parliament, \$141,667; and**
- **OE 130 - Administrative and Advisory Support to Members of the Parliament, \$175,574**

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

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.
Thank you very much, Mr. Premier.

Agreed: LEA 1, OE 5, OE 128 and OE 130 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Chair before we move on, I would just like to thank the Commissioner for being present with his staff and for being so very helpful to this Committee, sir.

The Chairman: Noted. Thank you very much, Honourable Premier.

ITI 1 — INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

The Chairman: Honourable colleagues, we are moving to Page 6; ITI 1 Output Supply for the Minister of Investment, Innovation and Social Development. The first item on the agenda is ITI 1 — International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands for an additional \$2 million. Are there any questions?

Sorry, you want to move that one? Okay. Okay. Apologies. I understand there will be some changes to the Schedule, so we will allow those to be circulated before we go on to that Ministry.

[Long pause]

The Chairman: Honourable colleagues, in the interest of time, we move to page 14 that deals with NGS 60, Sports Programme, in the amount of \$371,981 and I open the Floor for any questions.

This is being covered by the Member for West Bay North, Honourable Minister for Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

[Pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, I don't have a question but wish to thank the Minister for the pins that were given out to support our athletes who are off to Tokyo. I just want to thank the Honourable Minister for sharing those out this morning.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, Minister for Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, Elected Member for West Bay North: Mr. Chairman, the pins just arrived with my staff and the Opposition are being handed theirs as well.

The pins, and the reason we are wearing our pink ties today, is to send out our best wishes and good luck to the team that is in Tokyo. It is under a trying situation, but we do know that the whole country wishes them well and we do pray that they will have a safe trip and games that will see them do their best times and distances.

I would like to ask the country to pray for our athletes while they are over there in Japan.

Thank you very much.

[Desk thumping]

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR YOUTH, SPORTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: SPORTS PROGRAMMES

NGS 60 — SPORTS PROGRAMMES

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

We will start with NGS 60, Sports Programmes in the amount of \$371,981. Are there any questions? Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Could the Member indicate what focused sports were added and/or what increases were added to the focused sports to make up the amounts?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Thank you Mr. Chairman, through you.

In October 2020, the previous government approved that they would change to 8 focused sports and funding would be increased to \$150,000 per year. This funding was to be allocated as follows:

\$15,000 – Annually Certified Audit

\$75,000 – Technical Directors Salaries; and

\$60,000 – Sports Programme

Hence the \$371,981 that added to the previously approved budget of \$764,400 which brought it to \$1,136,381. This was decided under the last government and approved. This is just putting it officially on the books.

The Chairman: The Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman, can the Minister confirm then that there are no additional focused sports being added now?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: No. No, sir.

We still cannot figure out how some of the other ones became focus sports, but we are looking into that. Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions for NGS 60?

All those in favour of an additional \$371,981 for expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to NGS 60 — Sports Programmes, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 60 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: SPORTS PROGRAMMES

HAF 1 — MINISTERIAL SUPPORT AND ADVICE

The Chairman: Continuing on page 15 Honourable Members. We have HAF 1 — Ministerial Support and Advice, \$800,000. Are there any questions?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Is this the Ministry of Sports or Home Affairs?

The Chairman: No, this is the Ministry of Home Affairs. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, sir. Just trying to understand, Projected Expenditure for New Ministry of Home Affairs. I mean, I am playing on semantics here, but is this really a new ministry? Why the additional \$800,000 at this time?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Through you Mr. Chair.

The establishment of the Ministry of Home Affairs as an individual Ministry was the strategic decision of the Government. The decision reflects the significance of the subject matter under the Ministry which spans security, public safety, offender management and rehabilitation, and victim services.

There are over 430 fulltime employees across the various departments which include Prison, Fire, Department of Community Rehabilitation, Department of Public Safety Communications (or 911 as some people know it); the Regiment and the Cadet Corps. Within those subject areas there are 24/7 public services-related Security and Emergency Operations, as well as multi-agency, operational partnerships involving policies to manage various risks.

Continuing to enhance those public services requires a dynamic ministry that can engage, collaborate, and build strategic relationships at the local, regional and international levels. Establishing the new Ministry will allow the Government to—

1. Focus resources around a core of subjects that have policy and operational synergies; and
2. Create efficiency gains in delivering and implementation of key projects, programmes, services and activities

The supplementary funding will be utilised primarily to:

1. Recruit key staff to support Finance, Human Resources, Policy and Programme Management; and

2. Equip personnel with computer and communications equipment to perform effectively and efficiently

The Chairman: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I thank the Minister for that explanation. Can we get an explanation of what the \$800,000 represents?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: That will be . . . one second.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Can you turn off your mic.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: This is operational expenses.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Okay, sir. Thank you. I'm good.

The Chairman: Any other questions for HAF 1? Okay, there being no other questions all those in favour of an additional \$800,000 of expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to HAF 1 — Ministerial Support and Advice, please say Aye.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: HAF 1 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

HAF 6 — CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT REGIMENT

The Chairman: Thank you, colleagues. We move on to HAF 6 — Cayman Islands Regiment, in the amount of \$1 million. Are there any questions? Okay, seeing as there are no questions—

All those in favour . . .

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Sorry, sir.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you sir. Through you to the Member; in terms of a breakdown of what this would comprise, because I am aware that we did quite a bit of funding for them before we demitted office.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[[Pause]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Okay. Yes Mr. Chairman, through you, this is a supplementary to continue paying the bills actually from the last budget for the training of the officers and their stipends and so forth. We came and found this policy in place; we are just continuing to pay the bills for that.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions? Okay. Being that there are no other questions . . . All those in favour of an additional \$1 million of expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year, with respect to HAF 6 — Cayman Islands Government Regiment, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: HAF 6 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EI 85 — MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

The Chairman: Colleagues moving on to EI 85 — Minister of Home Affairs, \$230,000.

Are there any questions? Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Through you, Mr. Chair, I notice here again the description is “Development and operations of the Cayman Islands Regiment” and I am just curious to know whether, and this is really an equity injection what would appear to me to be to pay operational expenditures. Is my understanding correct and why does it come in here again?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Once again, this is capital to continue to buy equipment. For example, if we have to support the Fire Service or the police, we have to buy certain things to be able to assist them.

As you know the Regiment, as you all put it here, was a multi-task to help in emergencies and so forth in all the various front lines so, this is equipment that makes us work hand in hand with these various entities that we have to work with and assist in case of emergencies.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Again, through you to the

Minister, I guess the next question is what kind of equipment are we looking at for \$230,000?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Long pause]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Thank you for your patience. Mr. Chairman through you: water-purification equipment, communication equipment, vehicles, operational equipment, lighting, medical equipment and some new office furniture, IT and vehicle support.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman—

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, under the scenario of what is happening in the security; is there any thought in the budget in this vote for weapons, armory?

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: No.

The Chairman: Any questions with respect to EI 85, Ministry of Home Affairs? If not, I'll take the vote.

All those in favour of an additional \$230,000 of expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to EI 85, Ministry of Home Affairs being approved pursuant to Section 12 of the Public Management and Finance Act, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EI 85 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much. That concludes our appropriation requests for the Ministry of Home Affairs.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING, AGRICULTURE, HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: MINISTRY OF PLANNING, AGRICULTURE, HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

PAH 24 — AGRICULTURAL SUPPLIES AND REGULATORY SERVICES

The Chairman: We will now move to page 16, the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure and we start with PAH 24—Agricultural Supplies and Regulatory Services, \$1.7 million.

Are there any questions?

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Can the Member indicate whether or not this will include any new services and perhaps give a bit of background if this includes any COVID-related activities?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chair, this is for the purchase of agriculture supplies and a staff recruitment that is in there.

[Pause]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I'm sorry. Mr. Chair this is to purchase agriculture supplies because of over expenditures having driven the Department's need to respond to increased demand. At the time there will be no new services in this.

The Chairman: The Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank the Member for the response.

Can the Member or his team provide us an update on the Animal Welfare Law that we all have been waiting for?

Just to give some background, my constituents, in particular, are plagued with feral dogs attacking persons and other animals, et cetera. We have all been eagerly awaiting an updated law dealing with things such as mandatory spay and neutering, tougher licensing requirements for breeders and giving the enforcement officers some "teeth" to deal with these incidents; so, if the Member could give us an update on that law.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair, I can say to the Member for George Town North that that is actually being worked on and it will be coming to the House early in the year.

The Chairman: The Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, thank you to the Member; we look forward to it.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Just some further clarity on the \$1.7 million, through you Mr. Chairman to the Minister.

He mentioned that this is really for agriculture supplies, I'm curious to know if these are supplies to be consumed by the Department of Agriculture. I do know that they provide feed and supplies to the farmers themselves as well, so it would be interesting to know what this relates to.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, supplies for the farmers and the Agriculture Department.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think this is the appropriate area where I ask about farmlands. Due to the recent situation, in terms of COVID restriction of goods and everything else, I want to ask the Minister if there is any support for buying additional land for farmers, to increase the amount of farming that we do on the Island.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you to the Member for Bodden Town East, I can give him a guarantee that this Government is actually well behind that, and is looking to purchase more farmland throughout the Island.

The Chairman: Thank you. Any other questions?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes.

The Chairman: The Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to thank the Minister for that.

The Chairman: Okay, being that there are no further questions, all those in favour of an additional \$1.7 million of expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to PAH 24 — Agricultural Supplies and Regulatory Services, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: PAH 24 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 84 — GRANTS TO FARMERS

The Chairman: Moving on to TP 84 — Grants to Farmers, additional \$500,000. Are there any questions?
The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Through you to the Minister.

Can the Minister tell us if there is a set amount here for each farmer, the number of farmers that have received this grant and how much they would be receiving?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I can just say right at the moment that over 1500 farmers have received the grant and it was just around \$400 that they were actually given. That is each time, sir.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, sir. So, effectively, it seems to me to be a one-time grant for 1500 farmers. Is that correct?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: If you don't mind Mr. Chair, I will have my Chief Officer explain it a bit more in detail.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. May I ask you to state your name and title as soon as you answer the first question, for the record? Thank you.

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Good morning Members. Mr. Chair through you.

Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure (PLAHI).

The farm grant was initially started back in December. Each applicant was given \$400 on their card; subsequent to that, depending on the month that they applied, they got a top-up of \$400 each month. As the Minister correctly stated, over 1500 persons have received this grant.

The Chairman: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Through you Mr. Chairman to the Acting Chief Officer. I guess, 1500 doesn't go very far in terms of number of grants. If you say that they're actually getting top ups as well...so the number would actually be—if you take 1500 and multiply it by \$400, that's \$600,000, so it seems to me to be low.

I am curious to know why this is the amount and whether we should be looking to increase it further.

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chairman through you. For further clarification, the first card is issued at \$400 and each month subsequent to when that application is approved, they receive a \$400 top up per person each month.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I think it bolsters my position even further, sir. If they are getting \$400 a month, this does not go very far.

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chair through you, what we have seen and we still have to do some investigation following this initial grant, is that persons are utilising it and they have benefited from it.

Many of them were not necessarily farmers per se but the initial programme was to get persons interested in agriculture therefore, those persons started, they purchased things to bring them up to where they would get interested in agriculture and we would be able to further assist them; so we can say that persons are utilising it, and they are benefiting from it.

The Chairman: I think what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is getting at is that, if you're doing 1500 farmers at \$400 a month, that's \$600,000; over a three-month period that is \$1.8 million, whereas this is \$1.7 million. So I think what he is saying is that this is pretty much three-month's worth of money and the question is . . . I don't know; unless I'm leading—

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman through you. I fully support what she is saying. I know it. I understand. I'm not criticising that. As you are alluding to, the \$500,000 doesn't go very far when you are looking at these farmers getting this (amount), every month. So this Committee deems it appropriate as well to put it on the table that we look at increasing this through to the end of the year. What would be a logical amount? Should we put forward a motion to double it?

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chairman through you. To answer the Member's question, the farm grant was ceased as of the end of May so the grant is no longer in existence.

What the Honourable Minister has decided is that we are going to be looking at the grant and how we administer it, and how best we can assist farmers looking at sector by sector, and how that can benefit the farmers that way.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Then I guess I am not quite clear in my head, Mr. Chairman. If you are saying that the programme ceased at the end of May, are we funding what has already been paid to farmers?

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chairman through you, that is correct.

The initial grant for the programme was slated to end in February, that programme was extended as I said, to the end of May, and this additional funding is to cover the expenditure thus far.

The Chairman: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I guess that is a confirmation from the Minister, Mr. Chairman that the programme does not intend to recommence?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister. Sorry, the Honourable Minister of Education, the Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Education and Minister for District Administration and Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thanks to the current Honourable Member for Agriculture for giving way.

Just by way of background, Mr. Chairman. The Farmer's Grant was given for two reasons: mainly to assist the commercial farmers because there were having financial hardship, of course during COVID; but it also had a second peg to it which was the nation-build aspect of it, whereby we were encouraging back-yard farming, where you grow what you eat and you eat what you grow.

Obviously, a new Minister came on and he has to be given an opportunity to assess the programme but it is the consensus of the Government to look at the programme; and certainly the Minister has the full support of the Premier and all other Members—once the programme is looked at and he is satisfied that there is

sufficient funding there—to move ahead. [The Minister can rest assured that there is an undertaking that there will be proper resources.](#)

What was also intended to happen was that we originally got \$1 million for the initial programme and it was intended to go back for an additional \$1 million to mainly assist the commercial aspect of farming because we knew that capping it at the \$400 would be a level playing field, but to the extent of the requirement that the commercial farmers were having, with the drought and the lack of rainfall, we realised that the commercial farmers would need more than \$400,000.

It is my understanding that the Honourable Minister and Government intend to properly resource that funding. It is not a matter of stopping the programme because the Opposition, which was the Government at the time, recognised that it was an important programme and so does this Government. It is just a matter to give the new Minister an opportunity to assess it and refine it the way he wants to. That is my understanding, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay: Good morning Mr. Chairman and Members; but Mr. Chairman, if my memory serves me correctly, there was an announcement that the programme would cease and farmers would cease receiving any of the amounts granted at the end of May.

I have had a number of farmers who have made representations to me regarding it. So it does appear that the programme has ceased. It may be that the Minister intends to resume perhaps a modified version of it, but as far as the country and farmers are aware, the funding has ceased.

The Chairman: Was there a question or—okay, a statement.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: No, Mr. Chairman, I'm posing it as a question. The Minister himself is a farmer, so he ought to know that.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Just to clarify that the programme was ceased so that we can actually get some checks and balances into it and make sure that the money was actually being spent in the right way. That is to clarify that it was not actually stopped; we will be looking to bring it forward once we have everything sorted out.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman the Minister has inferred that the money which has been utilised so

far—which was granted under the previous Government, under the current Minister of Education—has not been spent properly. If that is the case, I would ask that he inform the Committee about whatever discrepancies, if I may call them that, have occurred with respect to that programme.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, all we want to do is make sure that the criteria is set better going forward. That's all.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure any of us are the wiser as a result of that response.

Mr. Chairman, this is an important matter; it is a matter that affects farmers who are generally on the lower end of the income scale in this country who struggle to keep farms going. Very valuable and important funding has now been ceased and based on what the Minister said, the inference is that somehow the money has been misspent. I believe this Committee is owed some explanation before we go on and vote more money.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I will have the [Acting] Chief Officer answer that question for him.

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chair through you.

I think what the Minister said, he was not inferring that that money was used incorrectly; he wanted to reassess, as Minister for Education also alluded to, for us to look at the programme and see how best we can assist farmers in addition to the subsidies that they are already receiving. Farming is very important to the Honourable Minister responsible for Agriculture and he intends to support the farming community in any way he can, just doing so in a more systematic, controlled manner, and it benefits the farmers for the overall food security of these Islands.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: So, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Acting Chief Officer for that response, but there is a clear inference that there was or is something wrong with the programme that was under way. The Minister referred to different criteria.

I think we would all like to understand what the criteria was and what are the issues which have caused the new Administration, the Minister in particular, to cease the grant programme. All I am asking for is an explanation.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, again, the [Acting] Chief Officer will answer the Member.

Ms. Leyda Nicholson-Makasare, Acting Chief Officer for the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure: Mr. Chair through you.

Honourable Member, there is not necessarily an issue with the criteria, it is just to ensure that we have checks and balances in place. We have to make sure that the application process—certain things we found. This programme was developed to assist during COVID and it was a critical time so we are just assisting to ensure as the Honourable Minister for Education indicated, that it was backyard farmers as well and maybe to reassess the programme to assist farmers that are already established, as well as backyard farmers.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you to the Acting Chief Officer.

Mr. Chairman could I just ask one more question then: Is the money being voted on today going to be sufficient to fund any future programme during the course of this calendar year?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany Ebanks: I would tell you, Honourable Member for Red Bay, that the money that we actually have here would only be able to carry us to a certain extent as the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, but I have no problem if we have the come back to get more money to continue this grant.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister give an indication as to when the programme might be resumed then?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: As soon as the assessment is finished, sir.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, when is that likely to be?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: As soon as the assessment is done, sir.

The Honourable Member is a farmer himself; all farmers were notified to come out to the meetings when we were having them, and the Honourable Member did not show up to that meeting to voice his opinion at that time, which he should have come.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I want to make something clear. I am here in my role as the Elected Member for Red Bay. I have not and do not intend to receive any of the Government grant. This is the place where Ministers and the Government have to give assurances to the House, to the Finance Committee, and to the country, as to the utilisation of public funds.

I am simply carrying out my role to interrogate the issue at hand. I am not satisfied by the responses—but they are what they are—but it is not for the Minister to tell me which meetings I should attend, or not attend, relating to farming.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman though...

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Between two Ministers they have given very clear answers—well, if you don't consider it clear, I do, because I understand; and I know you understand too, Member for Red Bay, I know you understand that all the intentions are there. The Minister of Education, who was the past Minister elaborated on it. The Minister has done his best to tell us between him and his Chief Officer what has happened; where they are going and that he is waiting on an assessment. Unless we're asking him to speak in the wind, which he does not want to do.

The Chairman: Any other questions with regard to TP 84?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman I would just like to sum it up how I understand it. The money that is being asked for has already been spent and basically needs a top-up, is what the Acting Chief Officer explained. The Minister has explained that there is an assessment taking place and once the assessment is completed it will be decided either to continue the programme or not.

I believe the Opposition wants to make it clear that they are in favour of farmers receiving stipends and to support the government in the continued work for farmers and the agriculture aspect of it.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that, Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

The Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair.

I am glad that a Member of the Opposition has finally gotten it, but to also understand that the funding that was associated with this had to do with COVID-19 related matters and we have to recognise that circumstances locally have changed since the first time that it was granted. It is fair for the Minister to take the opportunity to assess that who are getting it, are intended to get it, because otherwise, after COVID-19 has passed and we successfully open this country, are we suggesting that we continue with the \$1500 in grants until the end of time? The Minister has to assess that.

I think is a fair suggestion that he has made. I do not know why it is becoming more of a problem than it needs to be.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central is there a question in that statement?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: No, no question in the statement, sir.

The Chairman: Any other questions with regards to TP 84 — Grants to farmers?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chair I don't have a question but I have a statement. Once the assessment is done, that it is done in consultation with Wilbur who was the person responsible and with the Department, Mr. Adrian so that all of the considerations that were taken can be laid on the Table and these inuendos and unfounded implications can be clarified once and all.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister of Education.

All those in favour of an additional \$500,000 expenditure being incurred in the 2021 Financial Year with respect to TP 84 — Grants to Farmers, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 84 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EA 36 — MISCELLANEOUS ROAD SERVICE UPGRADES

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable colleagues. We move to page 18, EA 36 — Miscellaneous Road Service Upgrades for an additional \$4 million.

Are there any questions? The Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman if the Minister could give us an indication of where these funds will be spent; and also, on the miscellaneous road services, the National Roads Authority (NRA) generally moves in a rotation through districts. If the Minister could update us as to where they are in that rotation.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Through you Mr. Chair.

I was reliably informed that the NRA has less than \$500,000 remaining, hence we are requesting additional funding. This would actually be used for some district roads, one of which would be Water Cay Road leading to Rum Point, which was started under the previous administration but there was no funding to complete it, and some roads leading into the Eastern and West Bay sides of the Island.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you Mr. Chairman. To the Member; on the Water Cay Road when you say the funds were not there to complete it, you are talking about black top. In not completing, I think the plan was to pave to Finger Cay and then chip and spray down to the Public Beach. This additional is to pave all the way to the Public Beach?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Again sir, I was reliably informed when I became the Minister for NRA that that money was actually spent elsewhere and there is no money to actually complete the paving part of it.

Just to say that the chip and spray part of Water Cay that he is talking about will not happen under this Government; Water Cay Road is just as good as the Seven Mile Beach Road when it comes to tourism for the people of North Side and I do not think we should be chip and spraying a road, in North Side, that brings most of our tourists in that area.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Minister for the answer.

Just to say that I was reliably informed that we had funding to pave to Water Cay and then chip and spray the remainder of the way.

For the record, I supported paving the entire way to the Public Beach as that is a high traffic area with food delivery and people attending the Kaibo Restaurant, et cetera, as well as a road that is traversed

quite frequently by cyclists and pedestrians. I supported paving the entire way and providing bike lanes and pedestrian lanes as well. Just to clarify that.

I am happy to hear that they are moving forward with those works.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I am hearing about the Water Cay Road and from what I observed, that certainly needs to be done and West Bay Road also, more can be done.

However, what I want to find out is whether funds are being voted or asked for, for things like the drain wells and the district roads, because there are some serious conditions in certain areas which have to be addressed. Is there funding for those purposes, knowing that we are now entering rainy season, when you get all sorts of flooding issues.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, just to clarify that this money does provide for drain wells, some shoulder repair, guard rails and pedestrian crossings.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chair through you, drain wells but, are we getting funds to do some district roads?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Supplemental funds.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: You hush; you used it all before election.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, we have funding in here for some roads that have been identified by my West Bay colleagues.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair, I will wait for the back and forth—

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, when I asked for roads I did not specify McKeeva Bush's West Bay West constituency. I specified the entire West Bay because that is where I live and belong to.

Unfortunately, the Minister is not like that. When we should have been getting house roofs for old people, he was down George Town North putting guttering on people's apartments.

The Chairman: The honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Point of Order

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman a Point of Order—what was that?

If he is going to accuse me of that, he needs to specify where I put guttering on people's apartments.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Where? Go through... *[Inaudible interjections]*

The Chairman: Colleagues, colleagues, can we limit the back and forth across the Chamber please, and stick to the issue at hand?

Right now we are on EA 36—Miscellaneous Road Service Upgrades and the Honourable Member for Bodden Town East has a question for the Honourable Minister.

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

My question to the Minister is about the NRA and Water Authority. Have they sorted the necessary laws, in terms of road works and tearing up of roads and returning it to how they found it?

Mr. Chair, through you. The Belford community waited so long and in 2010 we got the funds to actually upgrade the road; 10 years later we got funding again to pave the road only to have it dug up again, and it is really ridiculous the state that it was left in.

I want to remind this House and the Minister that the Belford area is one of the lowest lying areas in Cayman and at least, if they have a paved road, it helps a passable situation. I know that there were conversations going on with the NRA and Water Authority. I do not know where that is at, and I would like the Minister to give me some information on this.

Thank you.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

I would say this has been a problem for decades but if I had to sum it up, I would think that sometimes the people in the NRA should be identified in speaking to the Water Authority, to find out if there is any work that needs to be done before they run and go paving roads, because there's a disconnect between both companies.

Moving forward, I have actually tasked them to actually find out from Water Authority if there are any road works that they have to do in certain areas before we go in and pave those areas.

The Member for Bodden Town East spoke about the people in Belford. I want to let him know that this Government will not be jumping any roads and we remember everybody so, we will actually be looking at sections in Belford that need any road paving work at the time too.

The Chairman: The Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is most welcome, Minister.

I want to say that Bodden Town has some of the lowest lying areas, I think, especially in the Cumber Avenue, Gun Square and Belford areas—they are almost like fish bowls.

We meet regularly with the NRA and Planning in terms of works that have been approved around these areas to ensure that the proper Storm Water Management Plan is put in place. Residents around the Cumber Avenue area, especially, get very nervous when they see these projects approved and they have no reliable information as to what Storm Water Management Plan has been done, because everything that is built in that area, just exacerbates the situation in terms of what they face. You really do not want to see what they face on a yearly basis.

We really need to find some resolve for Cumber Avenue and Belford. There have been suggestions, and they are working on a pump that had been left in the area but not completed. Some of the drain ponds need to be dug out, which kind of helps and gives you a five year buffer. I do not know if any briefing has been done with the Minister in terms of these two areas; if these are high on the NRA priority or not.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, just to give the Member for Bodden Town East some comfort. I think when the Premier first spoke, that was actually in one of his speeches—Storm Water Management.

It is something that, as a Government, we are seeing if we can actually resolve, because it is not only in the Bodden Town area; there are several other areas that need this, and the people have been asking for some sort of solution for decades now and it has always

been put to the back burner, it seems. However, I can tell you that it is actually a priority of this Government to come up with that also.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Bodden Town East?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I just want to say thanks to the Minister. I look forward to meeting with the teams, if necessary, to try to help with the situation.

Thank you very much.

The Chairman: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, there are a couple of areas that are known nationally for flooding. I would ask the Minister—and I know that when I last spoke to him, he said that areas like Randyke Gardens would be addressed; and we have a few areas.

Mr. Chairman, this is good for everyone in the House to know, that when we build subdivisions, what is happening is that people are putting up walls and it's causing flooding to go into areas that did not normally flood. If they are not putting up a wall, because it is a subdivision, it has gone two or three feet up from the ordinary level to be able to build on. That is also causing flooding where there was no flooding before. I have had that to deal with in several areas.

It is surprising how wide it can be from 1000 feet away and the water just travels, the water will find its level, and if someone puts up a wall and they built up in a subdivision, that water then moves and goes, as I said, where it floods out other people.

We know about Bodden Town, we know that area, but places like Randyke Gardens and certain areas in my district have to be looked at as well. That's why I asked earlier about deep wells, Mr. Chairman. Some deep wells will simply handle the amount of water, but there are areas where the Government is going to have to put in some serious plans, or equipment, or whatever, to really handle the amount of water that sometimes comes our way.

We do not know if we will get flooding like we did last year, but certainly we know that it is usually that way.

The Chairman: Thank you.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes sir.

Through you Mr. Chairman, just to thank the Minister as well for saying that they are looking closely at the Randyke area, because that is the biggest issue I face within my constituency in terms of the flooding. It's well known and has been an issue for nigh on 30

years. Something I think would certainly go some way towards alleviating or helping the situation, because it is pretty dire down there when you get any significant rain. There a number of drainage wells that have been placed there but are no longer working. They have collapsed, filled in—whatever. They no longer work.

I ask the Minister to look into having these re-drilled or have new ones put in. I know that there was one put in probably about a month or two ago, to alleviate some flooding in a specific area. I know the problem is big. It's not going to be an easy solution, but I think anything that we can do at the moment to try to alleviate in any way, the horrible experience that the residents over there go through, when there are any significant rains, would be most welcome.

So, I only ask if you could look into that, sir.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, Randyke has been one of those areas at the top of our priority list when looking into getting the flooding issues sorted out.

[I will keep the Leader of the Opposition up to date on this matter, and how we plan to move forward with it.](#) I also thank him for supporting this funding, so that we can help to get it sorted out.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Hearing what the Member for West Bay West said in terms of developments—in the US they have a system, or procedure, where any projects or plans always have catchment ponds set up in the area. Are there any plans to mandate catchment ponds?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Again Mr. Chair, through you, that would be something that we could actually look into through our Storm Management Plans, to see what is best for the country, sir.

The Chairman: Any questions on EA 36?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Sorry; Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the Honourable Minister for taking the time to go around with many of the Members, including some of the Members of the Opposition and the various constituencies to look at areas and roads that need to be addressed, as well as drains that need to be re-drilled.

I am glad to hear that the Opposition will be supporting future funding to address this serious problem, but I find it ironic that many of the questions that are being placed now were questions when they were in power and had the opportunity to address them; but, as the Honourable Premier has suggested, a national Storm Water Management Plan will be developed in this Administration.

The Chairman: Is there a question?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: No, Mr. Chair. I apologise, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: EA 36 and EA 148 are pretty much the same. Will there be any questions on EA 148 or is it okay to take both as a block? Sorry, Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Did you commit EA 148, prior Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: No, sir.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Okay. I would like to ask some questions.

The Chairman: Okay, no problem; that's fine. With no other questions, all those in favour of an additional \$4 million expenditure for EA 36 — Miscellaneous Road Service Upgrades with respect to the 2021 Financial Year, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EA 36 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EA 148 – MAJOR ROADWORKS - EXPANSION PROJECTS

The Chairman: Next item. EA 148 – Major Roadworks - Expansion Projects in the amount of \$2 million. Any questions?

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, these are all projects that were under way by the previous administration, so there is no question about our support for these going ahead, so we do not need to get into petty arguments about that. What we are trying to understand, Mr. Chairman, is how the various projects are

progressing, and whether or not there are adequate funds to have them done.

Expansion of the road network and upgrade of the road services is something that has been ongoing for eight years and will continually be necessary, so we do not have any arguments about that.

However, I have, Mr. Chairman, with your permission, specific questions so that I and my constituents, but more broadly the country, can understand where key expansion projects are in the process of being done, and whether or not the current Government is committed to completing them.

The biggest issue we have with traffic in Cayman is actually in my constituency, which is the narrowest point of the Island—one mile from the South Sound to the North Sound—and very little land there to do anything further with road expansion.

Currently under way we have the expansion of Shamrock Road; three lanes from the Red Bay School roundabout down to Grand Harbour and to South Sound. I see that work has resumed; I saw CUC actually moving the transformers this morning over to the north side of the road, so that is indication that work is proceeding, I hope.

What I would like to ask the Minister is, could he give us an update on how that project is coming along and when is it likely that it might be completed?

Also, so can I queue him up for all of them, the proposed extension from the Grand Harbour roundabout through to the King's roundabout, i.e. going around the back of the Lion's Centre—where we are with respect to that? And the controversial cut through from Selkirk Drive on to Bimini Drive, which has been a real battle. I see Mr. Tristan Hydes here, who has been the champion of most of these things and has done an immense amount of work on them, so hopefully we can get in an update on that.

Those are all related, so I will leave that there for the moment and I hope that the Minister can provide some information.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Through you Mr. Chair, I was reliably informed that yes, CUC is actually moving their transformers, et cetera, as we speak. That actually would take about a month for them to get everything out of the way. Then the completion and paving of that particular road will probably take between two to three months.

As to the road that I think the Member for Red Bay is talking about, the one that goes behind the Lion's Centre, we are awaiting the final design and the value of that.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for his answer, but I am not quite sure what he meant by the last bit, "the value of it". What is he referring to?

I say that, Mr. Chairman, because I know that the valuations and the traffic modelling exercises were completed during our administration. I am wondering if there is now a thought, perhaps, not to proceed with that road.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, there is still merit for that road, but we are just waiting on the actual value—basically, the final cost. What it will cost us to get there.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, the other bit of that question was about the proposed cut-through from Selkirk Drive on to Bimini—

The Chairman: Honourable Minister

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: —behind Grand Harbour.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, I think those roads are connected, if I am right, so they are all in the same package.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman that is actually not the case.

The controversy relating to the proposed cut-through from Selkirk Drive on to Bimini involves different landowners, notably Davenport Development, who kicked up a big ruckus about the proposal.

I know it is a difficult thing. I am not trying to press the Minister, I am just trying to extract a commitment from him that it is still proposed to proceed with this, because once this is done—as Mr. Hydes will attest to if he speaks—it will go a long way to cure some of the flooding problems down in Selkirk Estates because of the swale which is already there, but has not been used in many years and is overgrown. Part of the proposal was to sort that out so that water can run back down into the sound, rather than flooding the properties and the roads in that area.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: [Mr. Chair through you, just to ease the mind of the Member for Red Bay that it is a commitment for us to look into that. As soon as we have a better answer for him, we will let him know; maybe I could sit down with him and have a one-on-one with him to give him more details, if he needs.](#)

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I am intimately aware of all the issues relating to that which are, or were, in existence when I was Premier in the last administration, and I know that significant progress had been made with respect to the negotiations. So what I am trying to find out on behalf of my constituents who ask me about it weekly, is where that process is now. Has it stopped? Are things still proceeding?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, as the Member for Red Bay has recognised, it is not an easy task. There are many discussions going on with this road, so, I intend to continue pushing on with it and having the discussions with the people to see how we can get this resolved.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I hate to seem so persistent, but my constituents are as well.

Can the Minister or the Ministry give any indication as to how things are proceeding? Is it likely that this is going to occur anytime soon? Because we had considered some fairly draconian measures to ensure it happens by exercising the powers under the Roads Law to compulsorily acquire the land and so forth. That is what I am trying to understand—have those efforts ceased, or is it still an ongoing thing?

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, as the first answer I gave the Member for Red Bay: as soon as we actually have the final design of everything and what it is going to cost, we will be able to move forward in a better discussion with this road.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: So Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Minister if I can take from that, that the controversy about putting the road there, which has been the case with Davenport Development—has that issue been resolved, so it is now just a question of design and cost?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I have been reliably informed that we are still in negotiations with Davenport on that, sir.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank the Minister for his response.

Mr. Chairman, I just have two other questions: relating to the resurfacing of the Seven Mile Beach road, bits of which have been completed—other parts have not been able to be completed because they are

waiting on other utilities to do what they need to do. Could the Minister give us an update on that? I think it is imperative that we get that road resurfaced before the country reopens to tourism, when it becomes very difficult to do so.

Also, the junction by Flow there, with Eastern Avenue, which is in terrible shape because of all of the heavy trucks turning all the time. Does the NRA have that on their list of things to be repaired?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, to give the Member for Red Bay ease of mind that the Seven Mile Beach Road that he is talking about, [I went on a visit with yourself and the Member for George Town North on that and we gave the Member for George Town North the commitment that we would love to see that road done, paved, and fixed properly, before the tourism season comes back in.](#)

The Chairman: And Eastern Avenue?

Hon. Johany Ebanks: [Mr. Chair through you, as I am not too aware of what is happening on Eastern Avenue, I will look into it and get back to the Member for Red Bay.](#)

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. My question is in regards to the East-West Arterial Road. Is this road continuing?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you, that road is going to be continued; that is a main priority of this Government. We spoke about that in our SPS and I plan to see, with the support of you all, that we get that road as far as we can get it during our four-year tender.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Minister and thank you Mr. Chair.

The Minister may have heard this question often regarding the East-West Arterial, but I can assure him that the residents of the districts of Bodden Town, East End, North Side—and in some respects, the Prospect area—only want one more hour of sleep.

The situation is bad when we continue to import 400 to 500 vehicles a month and most of those are coming East, Bodden Town East being the fastest-growing district, so I want to thank the Minister for continuing with the good works of the East-West Arterial

Road and all the other connector roads that will benefit—the spin-offs there on. Thank you.

The Chairman: Any more questions with regards to EA 148? If not I'll take the vote.

All those in favour of an additional \$2 million for EA 148 – Major Roadworks - Expansion Projects, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EA 148 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Yes, Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany Ebanks: I would just like to thank my team and my colleagues for coming down here and lending their assistance.

The Chairman: Thank you; so noted.

Honourable colleagues, at this point we move to page 19 and look at the Output Grocery Purchase by the Minister of Health and Wellness.

OUTPUT GROUP TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND WELL- NESS

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: CAYMAN ISLANDS AND OVERSEAS HOSPITAL

NGS 55 - TERTIARY CARE AT LOCAL AND OVERSEAS INSTITUTIONS

The Chairman: The first item up is NGS 55 - Tertiary Care at Local and Overseas Institutions for the amount of \$17,635,840. Are there any questions?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I was going to suggest we just put that to the vote, sir; we know the historical issues here, and quite frankly I look at what we have had to pull from 2021 into 2020. This looks to me like a replacement of what should have been there, plus a little extra which is totally understandable, unless other Members do.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Minister: obviously NGS 55 which is the Seamen, Veterans and the indigents, represents 80 percent of the cost that the government is responsible for and the indigents, seamen and veterans are only 20 percent of the population the government is responsible for, in this area. It is a high cost, and annually we see this rising some 7 to 10 percent. Is the Minister actively looking at any programme to address the situation with this group of persons?

There have been some suggestions of a capitated model. I do not know if the Minister is keen on this. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, Minister of Health and Wellness, Elected Member for Prospect: Mr. Chair through you.

I am fully aware of that suggestion and in our Broad Outcomes 3(5) says Create Healthy Communities. Lower overall health insurance rates by increasing CINICO's competitiveness with the inclusion of wellness added to the Ministry of Health and Wellness. We are also looking at supporting more wellness preventative care that will be rolled out in the very near future.

The Chairman: Any other questions regarding NGS 55? If not, I will take the vote.

All those in favour of an additional \$17,635,840 with regards to NGS 35, Tertiary Care at Local and Overseas Institutions, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 55 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EI 53 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The Chairman: Next item EI 53 - Ministry of Health and Wellness, \$8,840,128. Are there any questions?

[Pause]

The Chairman: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: It's okay.

The Chairman: Seeing that there are no questions, I will ask for a vote on EI 53. All those in favour of an additional \$8,840,128 with regards to EI 53 — Ministry

of Health and Wellness, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it. Thank you very much.

Agreed: EI 53 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Mr. Chair through you.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ladies and gentlemen of the Ministry for all their hard work, understanding what we have before us with providing and making sure that tertiary care at local and overseas institutions are met. That gives well-being; many of our indigents and persons who are unemployed access, clear pathways, in knowing that we can meet these budgetary demands in a timely manner. I want to thank everyone for their support.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

At this point colleagues, we move to page 7 that deals with the output for the Ministry of Employment and Border Control. Since I am in the Chair, I will ask the Chief Officer, Wesley Howell, if he can take a seat beside the Member for West Bay West to answer any questions.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT AND BORDER CONTROL

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: MINISTRY OF EM- PLOYMENT AND BORDER CONTROL OUTPUT SUPPLIER: VARIOUS REFUGEE SERVICES

NGS 38 - SERVICE FOR IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

The Chairman: First item Honourable colleagues, NGS 38 - Service for Irregular Migrants, in the amount of \$3,064,000. Are there any questions?

Honourable the Leader of Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, this is a very significant increase from what was approved for 2021, so I guess my first question is, has the 2021 budget been exhausted at this point? I will have others after that, sir.

The Chairman: Mr. Wesley, can you state your name and title for the record before you answer the first question? Thank you.

Mr. Wesley Howell, Chief Officer, Ministry of Border Control and Labour: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Wesley Howell, Chief Officer for the Ministry of Border Control and Labour, previously the Ministry of Employment and Border Control.

Mr. Chairman, yes, sir; the number of irregular migrants and the length of time it has taken to process their cases has increased, and we have exceeded our budget for the two-year period.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I do not have any sort of historical information here with me to look at to know what we spent every year, but is there a feeling that we are likely to see a significant uptake in irregular migrants? I mean, \$3 million—more than doubling of this, and tripling of the budget, does raise an eyebrow for me.

Mr. Wesley Howell, Chief Officer, Ministry of Border Control and Labour: Mr. Chairman, yes. Usually this time of year is when we get the migrants coming across, primarily from Cuba.

With the recent developments there, it is our grave concern that we will see increased numbers through the remainder of this year; but the numbers as they are now, reflect the expenditure related to the migrants that come across and the time it takes to process their applications and deal with them as per the legislation.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Okay, seeing as there are no more questions, let's take the vote on NGS 38 - Service for Irregular Migrants in the amount of \$3,064,000.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it

Agreed: NGS 38 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 46 - EMERGENCY RELIEF PAYMENTS

The Chairman: Moving to TP 46 - Emergency Relief Payments in the amount of \$130,000. Are there any questions?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Seeing that there are no questions, I will actually take the vote. TP 46 - Emergency Relief Payments in the amount of \$130,000.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it

Agreed: TP 46 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

As the Minister with responsibility for Employment and Border Control, I want to thank Mr. Howell and his hard-working team for all the support that they have given. I can tell you that they are one switched-on unit and I am very impressed, so I just want to register my gratitude.

Mr. Howell, please pass it on to your team. Thank you.

[Pause]

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR TOURISM AND TRANSPORT

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: CAYMAN AIRWAYS LIMITED

CAL 2 - STRATEGIC TOURISM REGIONAL AND CORE AIR SERVICES

The Chairman: Colleagues, at this point we will move to page 8 with the Minister for Tourism and Transport.

The first item up is CAL 2 - Strategic Tourism Regional and Core Air Services, where an increase of \$7 million is being sought. Are there any questions?

Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, is this a move to top up this year because it was moved the previous year resulting from COVID? Do I read and understand this correctly?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, the Member is correct.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I think it would be remiss of me if I did not take the opportunity to thank Cayman Airways. I will start with the Ministry and go to the board and employees on what they have been through with COVID and how they reacted to that. The idea of Cayman Airways always being a lever and a tool for the economy of the country, and an insurance policy for the

people of the Cayman Islands has certainly brought value to Cayman Airways.

I would like to just drill down into a couple things that I get questions on quite often. One is that a tremendous number of students and people with health issues are not able to travel because there are no seats available in the market.

Can I ask the Minister if he can address that and if there is an idea of when more flights will be added, so this is resolved for the people of the country?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair, through you to the Member. A very timely question I dare say for the House.

The circumstances are dire, as we have a long list of persons who have requested to have flights available. The unfortunate situation is that persons have not detailed what the reason for their flight reservations are. Just over 10 days ago we had 800 persons on a waiting list to go out of the country. As this House will be aware, the current circumstances are that they should only be leaving for essential services, like education and health.

Unfortunately, because we have not mandated, or asked, persons to prove those circumstances before—we would hope that people will be mature and respectful enough to adhere to the Government's request for essential travel only—and request the facts for that, persons have taken up all the seats that we have been allowing to fly out.

Recently I approved two flights to leave the Island to go to Florida and those two flights, I have instructed Cayman Airways to go through the list of 800 persons who have reservations to determine whether they fall within the two categories of travel—for education or medical purposes. If we find more than the amount for two flights to go out, then we will add more flights because those are essential travellers, but at this particular point we are trying our best to manage the want for many people who want to travel for vacation purposes over the need of persons who are travelling for essential purposes.

The hope is that once that is resolved (going through those 800 persons), all persons who need to travel for essential purposes will be able to do so.

The Chairman: The honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Minister for a very good explanation of what is taking place.

Is the policy of the Government that you cannot travel for business, you can only travel for education and medical?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. Through you to the Member.

At this particular point the flights are determined as *repatriation* flights and they are only supposed to be for essential travel; we have not determined that business is essential, hence the reason we are being “loose” with allowing persons to make reservations in respect to that.

Unfortunately, persons who are using it for vacation purposes are causing this problem, so we are examining whether or not we are going to be harder on anybody making reservations moving forward, by asking them to prove their reason for leaving.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. So, if I understand that answer correctly, there is a loose interpretation of what essential is?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I apologise, Mr. Chair. Can you ask the Member to repeat the question?

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: There's a loose interpretation, as the policy of the Government, of what essential really is?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: No; my apologies. Through you, Mr. Chair.

Not a loose interpretation of the policy. We have been loose in respect to mandating persons to prove that they meet the criteria for leaving. Meaning, when you go to Cayman Airways to make a reservation, you are not asked to show that you are going off for educational purposes or medical purposes.

The Government's policy is:

- Persons below the age of 22 who are going for educational purposes are allowed to be accompanied by their parents; and
- Persons going for medical purposes are allowed to have at least one person accompany them, if they feel they need to have a person.

That is currently the Government's policy.

I recognise, Mr. Chair, that the Member has highlighted business travel as a potential third criteria. Of course this Administration wants to facilitate opportunity to allow business to continue to function, but at this particular point—because we are in a pandemic—we maintained the current criteria, which was there before we came.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Again, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for that reply.

I would ask the Minister, on behalf of the Opposition, and on behalf of representation that I get on a daily basis, if he would consider looking at the needs of the country from a business standpoint.

We are not sure when this country is going to open, but I do know that the business of the country has to continue, and people cannot get back and forth to continue with their work, their business and their livelihood.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Member for the question.

We do recognise the need for business to continue, but also the Government has to balance the necessary resources available to facilitate those needs in respect to Travel Cayman and the pressure on the Cayman Airways team.

We have many persons who want to go out and if we do not plan it correctly, we may end up flying at a loss. As you can see, we are trying to get another \$7 million for Cayman Airways, and if there are not enough people coming back you end up with a loss, which is something we are going to have to truly consider while examining the flights right now and the request for persons to leave the Island—whether the flight can go out full and potentially come back half-full; but the Government will examine if business purposes should be a listed criteria.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I thank the Minister for that Mr. Chairman.

Again, What I am understanding that you are prepared to review opportunity for business travel to be looked at and balanced, and more seats be put into that? Before I finish and receive your answer to that, I want to encourage the Minister to look at Cayman Airways not from their balance sheet completely, but as the need of the country itself and look at the country's balance sheet and remember that Cayman Airways is part of that. It is like having a hardware store—to make a delivery, you have to have a truck. Your balance sheet is not the truck, your balance sheet is the hardware store.

I know, Mr. Chairman that the Member understands that. I think the timing for giving the country some more balance, from the standpoint of Travel Cayman and making access of movement a little bit easier, is now upon us.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you honourable Member. I do agree that we have to be as facilitating as possible in respect to continued business opportunities for travellers and not to use Cayman Airways only from a profit making perspective because it is a necessary tool to facilitate travel for Caymanians in emergency circumstances; thank God, during the pandemic we had

our own airline, and I know the Member recognises that.

It is something that we will consider, also recognising that we are almost there in respect to re-opening anyway, as you are aware, we are in phase 4 of our reopening plan—the Open Skies Agreement will be open as of September 9th, which will ease the pressure on Cayman Airways.

I am certain that the CEO and the staff at Cayman Airways will do everything we possibly can to facilitate the necessary travel as to the criteria. Obviously it will be quite difficult to specify which types of business travel are necessary and if we should set out a criteria for that; I will ask the staff to do that and see if something like that is feasible.

I suspect that we can resolve the problem without having to specify further criteria than what we currently have, because so far persons have been able to do business up until this point, but we will make sure that the top priorities—travel for students and medical purposes—are facilitated.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Mr. Chairman again, I thank the Minister for that.

Can the Minister confirm that the staff of Cayman Airways who have done an incredible job continue to be completely paid and there is no view of changing any of the policy that is in place now?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. If I understand, the question was will they be completely paid as per the contract? The answer is yes.

The Chairman: Any other questions with regard to CAL 2 - Strategic Tourism, Regional and Core Air Services?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman, I will take the question in a slightly different direction.

Can the Minister tell us whether the discussions and negotiations with the lessor and the manufacturer of the three-year aircraft that we are operating now, regarding compensation, have been concluded and payments received?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. Please give me one second to speak with the staff.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, the simple answer to the question is yes. Many of us are

aware of the circumstances with the Boeing 737s, but I invited the CEO for Cayman Airways to address the House and give a little background, so the honourable House can know.

The Chairman: Can you state your name and title for the record before you answer the question. Thank you, Mr. Whorms.

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; Fabian Whorms, CEO at Cayman Airways.

With respect to negotiations pertaining to the 737-8 aircraft, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, you specifically said negotiations with the lessors?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I said, *and with the manufacturers*.

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Okay. Lessors and manufacturers.

All the issues involved with Cayman Airways receiving compensation for hardships endured during the process of the Max grounding have been resolved to our satisfaction.

I would venture to say that we have done well as far as we know, comparatively speaking, against other airlines in terms of the compensation we received. You may be aware that there was a second period of grounding which did not really affect our operations because the aircrafts that were primarily affected by that were not yet put in service by Cayman Airways, but we received adequate compensation for that as well.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Through you, sir, to the CEO. With regard to the two remaining 300s, I know that they still remain on Island. Can you tell us what the thinking is with regard to their disposal, or otherwise use of those aircrafts going forward?

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Through the Chair. Our policy, since the three 737-8s have been in full service, is to discontinue use of the 737-300s. However, we have until the end of October to dispose of those aircraft, October being the point where significant maintenance will be due on both aircrafts; but they remain airworthy up until October.

We are on track in our process, which is to put them out to public tender and invite bids on the aircraft. Along the way we had some decisions to make—it is really a package of two airframes and five engines—so it's a decision: how do we combine the five engines with the two airframes, so that we create two aircrafts that we can achieve the best prices for.

In other words, if we were to have one airframe which is a run-out airframe—it is due a lot of maintenance soon—it may suit us to put the two run-out engines on that particular airframe, so that we put the two best engines on the airframe that has significant time and therefore maximise the good assets, rather than placing a good asset on an airframe, essentially spoiling that asset. So we have been carefully going through that for some time now.

We are also mindful that, with the 737-8 aircraft being returned to service globally, there was a second grounding within the first 6 weeks; we know there is a lot of scrutiny on these airplanes, so we are not in a magnificent rush to dispose of the 300s because we may have to actually fall back on them at some point. That feeling dwindles each day because the 737-8s are now spreading their wings, so to speak, and throughout the world they are performing very reliably. It seems as if the issues that regulators may have had, have now subsided, so I think the October timeline for the disposal of the 737-300s is something that we will realise.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition:

One final question from me: With regard to delivery of the fourth 737-8 aircraft, and understanding there may be sensitivities in terms of where you are, can you give us any information as to what the thinking is at this time?

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Through the Chair. There is actually a lot of sensitivity with that one because if the aircraft not delivered as of September this year, it will technically be more than twelve months late and that puts both parties to the lease in a situation where decisions will have to be made.

Like I said, that is actually a very sensitive matter; we are in the process of anticipating what our decisions are, either way.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I appreciate that and will not pursue it.

The Chairman: The Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. The sale of these two 300s by October—We can take comfort from Finance Committee that the cash from those sales—you're converting an asset to cash—that cash will remain with the company, today you're going to get a vote for \$7 million but you also have millions coming from the sale that can also help fund the company if you have any negative spend between now and the end of this budget?

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Through the Chair. We have factored the inflows that we expect to get from the 300s to go

along with the appropriation that we are hoping to get today as a combined or total amount that would be necessary to help us get through to the end of the year.

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. I thank the CEO for the answer.

I want to make sure that that you completely understand that the Opposition is in full support of Cayman Airways. [The Minister understands that, we have given them a commitment](#), so if there is going to be more funding needed, the earlier we know about it, the better it is for us but just for clarity: you said that in your budget until the end of the year, you have anticipated what the sale price is going to be, and you incorporated that income into that budget?

Mr. Fabian Whorms, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Airways: Correct.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, on the issue of persons who may need to leave the Island, I think it would be appropriate that I say, because I know the media is listening: any persons who have not yet made any reservations, who need to leave the Island for educational or medical purposes, please call Cayman Airways and let them know, so we can determine the demand—if we need the extra flights. It is important because right now we are only going through those who have made reservations; if you need to fly for those purposes, please call Cayman Airways so we can make the necessary arrangements for extra flights if the demand is there.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I really want to thank the Minister for what he just said for the public's consumption, because I can tell you that there are thousands of people that are trying to get comfort to move back and forth. I think that will go a long way in prompting them to try to get in touch with Cayman Airways Ltd. (CAL) and Travel Cayman.

The Chairman: For the record I think the number is [949-2311](#) or [949-8200](#).

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Are there any other questions with regards to CAL 2? If not, all those in favour of an additional \$7 million of expenditure being incurred in the

2021 Financial Year for CAL 2 - Strategic Tourism Regional and Core Air Services, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CAL 2 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 67 - SPORTS AND CULTURAL TOURISM PROGRAMMES ASSISTANCE

The Chairman: The next item, honourable colleagues, is TP 67 - Sports and Cultural Tourism Programmes Assistance, for \$27,500,000. Are there any questions?

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Just a second.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, before my members from Cayman Airways leave, I just want to thank them for all of their hard work as the former Minister has said, continued from the last administration straight through to this one. It was a pleasure to have met with them to discuss the future and talk about the way forward. I thank them so much for being here today.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. They are not going far, with that rain.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Sorry. Continuing on with TP 67 - Sports and Cultural Tourism Programmes Assistance, \$27,500,000.

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman is this the stipend programme?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, yes, this is in respect to the stipend programme.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Minister. Through you Mr. Chair. Can the Minister say how many people are now receiving a stipend?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

As you would remember from our press conference and Ministry statements, we opened the stipend programme for persons who may have missed the deadline for some reason or another. So far we have 3,471 and we are examining, verifying, and approving 441 applications to see if they meet the criteria based on the information presented.

[Pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, the 441 applications have not been completed yet, so we suspect it will be somewhere between 0 and 441 that would be approved. That number will then be added to the 3,471 that are currently receiving the \$1,500 in stipend.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Minister for that. Mr. Chairman—

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Mr. Chairman, if I can ask a few more questions.

I want to commend the Minister and the Government for continuing the programme; it is desperately needed especially by the tourism workers who depend on it.

Through the Minister, I would like to ask the Government to consider the increase of this to \$2,000 a month. I would also like you to consider looking at this from a standpoint, and let us support you in the vote today, to move this allocation from \$27 million to \$40 million. I will tell you the logic behind it: you have just told me 4000 people a month is about \$8 million a month at \$2,000 a head, and you have five months left in the year—that's your \$40 million; but I will let you answer the consideration.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair. So, the question you are asking is whether or not the Government would support an increase from \$1500 to \$2,000 at this particular point?

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Through you Mr. Chair. The Opposition will support the Government if the ask for \$27 million is increased to \$40 million, to enable the stipend to increase to \$2,000 a month and then not go to half of it in November and December, but continue to receive \$2,000 a month. That gives you five months of assurance to the tourism workers that are not working, that they will be made whole through the end of the year.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: The other part of the ask is this \$13 million more, Mr. Minister, is basically going to

spend in our economy and when you put a multiplier effect—a seasoned Finance man like the Minister of Finance might have a different opinion—but my multiplier would be somewhere around five times, so that is hundreds of millions that remain in this economy, that spurs from an increase vote today of only \$12 million.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you, Mr. Chair. I ask the Member to give me a few seconds to discuss with my colleagues.

[Crosstalk and Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair and I thank the former Minister for his question, and I know his intent is a positive one.

The Government is of the view at this particular point that, with the many different programmes that we are laying out, like the free food for all children in government schools from a Primary level; other assistance that we have been offering to Tourism Stipend-related persons, for example, the continuation of the Stingray City feeding programme and—I do not want to steal the thunder from the Honourable Minister of Commerce, but we will be making other announcements that will also assist them. From the extension to the Health Insurance elements that you heard from the Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness, to the extension to the Wildlife Interaction Zone (WIZ) programme. My Ministry is examining the waiver for continued fees for the Ministry of Transport, and also considering the business grant, which we believe will have some positive results in very short order.

This Administration believes that all of those efforts to assist Caymanians who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 circumstances, combined with the current \$1,500 mark, should be sufficient to assist persons going through this. Also bearing in mind that the Foreign Office already approved the current projections moving forward, if we increase the budget any further, we can increase our deficit at the end of this year as well.

The reason for highlighting the \$750 in November and December is that we are of the belief that things will turn around in the coming months, particularly in Phase 5 where, on October 14th, persons who are quarantined can come directly into the Island. All indications show that Cayman should have a major boost with the number of reservations at an all-time high. People are literally waiting like on Black Friday to come through our borders, so we suspect that people will be back to work. We have been working with industry stakeholders to emphasise those 3000-odd persons who are unemployed—to focus on them first.

I have been working closely with the Minister for WORC to ensure that work permits are not ap-

proved, particularly in areas that Caymanians are readily available. You also may have heard of the survey that we announced, to identify the Caymanians; we are going to release that report this week—it contains details and information that highlight what areas they are working in, how many people are in cruises and stay-over, how many have been part-time, full-time or not working at all.

So there are a number of things we have to assess, things we are doing collaboratively, why we do not believe there is a need at this particular point. That \$1,500 should be able to assist Caymanians to get to that magical date where we believe, in Department of Tourism and Ministry of Tourism will be October 14th for the resurgence of tourism in the Cayman Islands.

I will close off by saying that this Administration is willing to make the necessary changes, if we see it fit. If as we start to open, things are not going the way we would like them to go, and start to conspire against us, we will make the necessary increases or additions to this budget allocation to make sure Caymanians get all that they need to survive.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, may I just make one intervention, please?

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister say whether those various dates for the phased reopening are all contingent upon an 80 per cent vaccination rate for the population?

In other words, do we have to get to 80 per cent before any of those triggers are pulled?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair, hopefully that answered the first question for the Honourable Elected Member? Yes?

To the question beforehand, as per the plans, and I am certain that the Honourable Elected Member for Red Bay is aware and has seen the plans, at least I would hope so, that do specify that it is contingent upon the 80 percent. I know that the Opposition highlighted in their rebuttal during the SPS debate, that they are of the view that it is 75 per cent.

Now, we on the Government side believe, and are optimistic, that working together as Opposition and Government, we can convince the people of this country that getting vaccinated is the right thing to do; so much so, that the Leader of the Opposition—I am not aware if the Elected Member is privy to this because it has been a private conversation. I have spoken to the Leader of the Opposition and we are going to stand together to encourage the people of this country to get vaccinated.

We believe that we can get to that mark and we are thinking positively rather than negatively so rather

than saying if we do not get there, what we believe is that we are going to get there and we are going to do whatever it takes to get to that 80 per cent, to be ready to open the country on October 14th, when persons who are vaccinated can come and proceed straight to enjoy the Cayman product called CaymanKind.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I do not want to get into a debate with the Minister or anybody else about the amounts now, except to say that according to the position that the Government and the Minister have taken, whether or not tourism workers are able to live and provide for themselves and their families is contingent upon the reopening; 80 per cent of the population—even if you take that outside number of 71,000 as the population base—will require 90 per cent of those who are eligible for vaccination to be vaccinated.

Everyone we have spoken to and all of the numbers that we have done, indicate that no country in the world, except our friends there in the other overseas territory next to Spain—Gibraltar—has been able to do that. So our concern now is not an argument about whether or not the Government has got it right in terms of the percentage; our concern is the constant representations that are made to us by tourism workers who are struggling to put food on the table.

What we are saying is that we are prepared to support the Government in ensuring that we vote sufficient funds to make it easier for those people to live, whether the Government is right or not in its projections as to when we will be able to reopen.

We are saying we will support you having \$40 million. If you do not need it, you do not need it, but if you need it, it is there.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, through you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I want to say thank you to the Honourable Elected Member for Red Bay—I think his intent is positive—but to say that we recognise that things are slowly changing from when the \$1,500 was first highlighted, from so difficult—where people were not at the hotels, period—to where things are, where our local economy is doing well. So, actually, they are probably better off today than when the \$1,500 started. We believe that, combined with the rest of the programmes we offered, can help us get through to that plan of when things reopen.

If, again, things conspire against us and it does not go well, this Government is prepared to come back to this House and ask for more money; if at that stage things, are so bad that we feel we have to increase it to \$2,000, then we will do so as well.

However, highlighting the fact that only one other country in the world has done so in respect to the 80 per cent, I dare say if anybody else can do it, the Cayman Islands can, and I am going to stay positive in that respect. I hope that the Opposition will support the Government by increasing support for persons to get vaccinated.

In closing, to highlight the fact that Dr. Lee has given this recommendation; the same Chief Medical Officer (CMO) that advised the previous Government has advised that we get to 80 per cent before reopening, so we are following the same directions as the previous administration.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. I agree, we need to follow the science.

Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister... I heard him mention earlier, a myriad of stipends and support to the community. I do not know if he mentioned the musician stipend—a group that is suffering out there and depend on the tourist dollar.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair and through you to the Member.

As you know, the music stipend doesn't fall within this Ministry, but I appreciate the request in respect to it, it is something I am happy to discuss further with Caucus, but in many of the programmes that we have extended, representation has been made to us within Caucus and I must say that nobody from the Music Association has said anything, that I am aware of, in respect to wanting additional funding.

I am certain that the capable Minister will be happy to entertain a discussion to see if that is feasible within the budget.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to pose this question again with the Minister. We have a tremendous tourism industry. It was not their fault that COVID came and we had to shut down. We have an industry that was booming in 2019/early 2020. If you were in that industry, young or old and Caymanian, you mortgaged and borrowed everything you could because you saw opportunity and the entrepreneurial spirit of every person in this country came forward. That meant that they borrowed money to buy new buses, new taxis, new boats, they borrowed money for computers and marketing plans, and we shined with the efforts when we were looked at regionally and globally.

The Minister has explained a position between now and the end of the year, and I take his point; I understand what you are saying. I understand the deficit issue. We are taking the position that we give the opportunity to work with Government, to work with the Minister to better help these people who are still not sure what is going to happen. The idea of the opening plan and the 80 per cent is not a concrete opening plan.

We have looked at and given a specific number of not only what the gross amount would be to protect people to the end of the year at the numbers you think, but also to show what it would do for the local economy, because this money is not going to go anywhere. That money would turn over in the local economy. There are finance people here that might have a different multiplier than five, I use that conservatively, but that is \$200 million to put into this economy between now and the end of the year. It is the idea of empowering people with another \$500 a month to help them get through.

The second part of it is that the stipend itself is a channel to get help to an industry that through no fault of their own (they are all one, they are us); it is no fault of theirs that they are in this position, but I can tell you—as you well know, because we have talked about it—they are calling nonstop for help with house payments, car payments, food, food vouchers, electricity. They need us to help them now, and we are here and want to help them.

So, I ask you again to look at it and even if you cannot commit to the whole \$2000 until the end of the year because of the deficit issue, at least give some commitment to give them some hope—that's number one.

Number two: I look forward to the announcements that the Minister responsible for Commerce is going to give, because not only does the stipend desperately help the people in need, but the small and medium-sized tourism-related businesses of this country are hurting and they are not going to get any better. If we were to open up in the last quarter of this year, they are not going to be made whole for two years with the amount of money they have had to spend to keep their doors open; we need to face this. We need to understand how we are going to help them.

I look forward to the Minister of Commerce and certainly will be happy to have comments when he does his proposals. I say that as a unity here with the Government of the day that we want to help in any possible way and we believe that they need the help.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. I again want to say thanks to the Honourable Member for his questions and his support to the Government, on behalf of the Opposition, to increase this amount.

Mr. Chair, unfortunately, the circumstances are that the Government is responsible for the country's finances and due to the lack of examination of persons

who are getting the stipend, it is difficult to tell who is truly deserving of it. We hear the discussion about who is in need of it. Sadly, when the stipend was created, all you had to submit was that you were working in tourism at that particular time, and you were affected in some way. Right now there is no criteria to say, *have you been back to work?*

I did not want to go down this road because what we have to highlight now, is that there are people working full-time who are still receiving the money.

Ideally what needs to happen is, like with the Needs Assessment Unit (NAU), an assessment needs to be done to give you the money—the Government of the day is responsible for the funds. You may have your business back up and running, making the same amount of money you were making before and the Government does not question that and you still get that check. *Should we increase the money to \$2,000 for those individuals?*

I have a survey, which I have not released yet, that indicates that there is 35 per cent of persons who are back working a five-hour day, and they are still receiving the money; 74 per cent who are working 30 hours or less a week. So there are Caymanians who are making it, but the Member is correct, there are some Caymanians who are not making anything yet. For example, 35 per cent of the persons who are taking the stipend work in the cruise industry.

Now, we already announced that that will not come to fruition until next year with God's will, so we have to do a better examination of that and that is what my Ministry is doing now. We will make the necessary moves as we see fit. This Administration is committed to making sure those who are in need will get, but the truth of the matter is, the criteria that was set out before was not efficient enough to tell who is genuinely in need.

Now, I am going through that process and I will commit to this country, that if we find that persons need more, we will give them more; and those who are back to work, can now genuinely say, I am going to step back, I do not need that money anymore; another Caymanian who is in need, can get it.

Those are the true facts of the situation, but the Government is committed to making sure that we spend money correctly.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I thank the Minister for explaining that to us. I think your thought process is well-positioned.

Can you give us a timeline on when you are going to increase the tourism stipend to \$2,000 a month for the people who desperately need it, based on your survey?

The Chairman: Through you Mr. Chair.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you, Mr. Chair. Thankfully I did four years in Opposition, so I can understand that strategic question and will not fall for that trap. I did not say that I would be increasing it to \$2,000. What I said is that I would discuss further with my colleagues as for the need—what is necessary for those who are not getting.

If we see it fit after examination through my Ministry—the Department of Tourism—those persons who will need that because they are not getting any work at all, then we will be happy to assist them further—if we see that it is necessary.

The Chairman: Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Again, I thank the Minister. I would just like to comment.

Mr. Minister, I asked about the timeline for the same reason that I asked for a commitment to end of the year, because when you do not have money, you do not have money, so if they know that there is hope coming in 15 or 30 days, it gives them some comfort. I ask you to make that number of time that you believe it will take you to be able to make this commitment, when can they, reasonably, expect to hear something?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair and to the Member.

Again, thanks for the question. In respect to the timeline of when they expect to hear some announcement of what is the Government's position in respect to the stipend, I would say within a month we should be able to tell exactly what we are doing moving forward, because by then we should have a better assessment of those who have been surveyed and what the data says and we will be releasing that to the media soon.

I understand that the Opposition is suggesting \$2,000; if we find that it needs to be increased even more, then we will do so, but at this particular point we are not going to increase just for increasing sake. We have the responsibility to make sure that when we increase the money, it is for the persons who are genuinely in need of that money because I do not want a situation where an audit is done, and they can say, *how can you say whether the person was in need of this money or not?*

Now I am, unfortunately, concerned that the way the criteria was set up in the first place, it gives room for persons to call for an audit in respect to determining how whether this person needed the money or not. That is something we have to be cautious about hence the reason the Government—this Administration—cares about the Caymanian people just as much as you. However, we are accountable for the people's taxes and we are going to make sure that those who are in need of it will get it, before we decide to increase the money.

The Chairman: Sorry to interject. Just to expand on what the Minister said.

Right now, for example, we are aware of two people who are employed by government and are actually still receiving the stipend, based on the current criteria. For those people, you are now fully employed working for the Cayman Islands Government but still drawing the stipend and depriving other people.

I mean, it is a sad case, but the rules as they stand right now still allow them to actually draw this money. And those are only two cases that we are aware of inside central government, so I do understand.

The Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Thank you for that interjection and we wholeheartedly agree with what you just said. I commended the Minister for doing the study. We are more worried about the timing on it and how we can implement it and help the people who are in need.

For my final question, I would just ask the Minister if he would look at what the process is at NAU social service, as far as how they look at helping the people that go there when they are getting a stipend or not but certainly in need, because of the tourism and other issues.

Thank you.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair. I thank the Member for the question again and I agree.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chair to the honourable Member, as the Member fully well knows, the Ministry does not have the staffing complement necessary for the procedures that are required, like the Needs Assessment Unit. These persons need to have the qualifications and be able to investigate by a line of questioning and checks. Say for example, if you go to the Needs Assessment Unit and you need help with your rent, you have to show that your bank account doesn't have any money in it. You have to show that your pay stub is "X" amount of money and that there is a cost/benefit analysis done, so to speak.

The staff that we have need to now start focusing on marketing the country again for tourism. Now, unless the Member is suggesting that we add another 25 or 50 staff to the Ministry of Tourism, we cannot do that. I am now tasked with the responsibility of saying how do we fairly assess whether a person is in need of this, while the staff is simultaneously responsible for marketing this country and ensuring the reopening plan is done properly.

I want the Member to recognise the complexities of these circumstances without trying to add more staffing; the Government has already approved this budget without having more expenditure by salary. We are examining that and I am certain that we can find a

solution if the Member is okay to give us more time as we do the proper analysis because, as we said in our SPS, we are a data driven Government and we are going to make the decisions based on what the data tells us, hence the reason for the survey. We would hope to announce to the public that those who are genuinely in need will continue to get the help and those who are back on their feet can be kind hearted enough to say, *I no longer need the money*.

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, again I want to thank the Minister for his answer—I am not sure what the answer was to.

In closing, what I was simply asking the Minister was to look at what happens between tourism workers who are in the process of trying to get help for many years. I do not expect anything more than maybe you want it for your own knowledge of the people in your industry. Are they having issues or are they not having issues? That was the only thing I had as far as the question and I think that you will do that, and you will find out, because you want to know.

Thank you.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Through you Mr. Chair, the Member is correct.

I did not fully answer the question that you were asking which is to do the process quite similar to the Needs Assessment Unit. He is correct, that needs to be done. I was suggesting that I may have to examine how that is going to be done, because the technical staff at the Ministry of Tourism cannot do that. Neither should they be doing that at this particular point, because they need to focus on the reopening plan. So I have to sit down and have an examination of which Ministry is going to have to take up that responsibility in order to do so.

Nevertheless, I am glad to hear that the Opposition is willing to support the decision, if necessary, of stopping persons from getting the stipend, if they are fully back to work.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I think I made it quite clear to the Minister that we understand and appreciate what he is doing, as far as the survey, and the people that are in the industry that are back at work and do not need the stipend and I think that the rule for that would be, if they are doing as well as they were doing before COVID, I

would say they are back to where they are from a tourism standpoint.

If you also find that they have re-purposed themselves and took advantage of some of the skillset offerings and found another job in the construction industry, we are with you. We agree with you. If your survey finds that they have re-skilled, re-tooled and are making income for their family, then that gives us even more room to increase the stipend to the ones that need.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Then you are saying that you would support that those persons who are back to work stop getting the stipend. Is that correct? Is that what I understood?

The Chairman: Alright. I think we have—.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Is that what I understood, Member?

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Through you Mr. Chair, I believe that the Minister understands that we are in support of what he outlined that he was going to do to find out who was in need and who was not; so I am assuming that if they are back at work and their reskilled and making what they were before, they are not in need.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I take that as yes.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, just let me make this observation: there would be virtually no one in the tourism industry who was working in the tourism industry who currently makes from tourism the kind of income they made before the shut-down, because there are virtually no tourists here.

I think what we are debating, really, is how many people are there who have gone out and found other jobs, who are making what they were making pre-COVID as Minister Kirkconnell spoke about. So I don't think the numbers that we are talking about are great, because I move around this country and I go to many bars and restaurants, and I talk to the people as recently as last night.

You know, most of those people's hours have been cut hugely. When you take a company like the one that owns Grand Old House, Lobster Pot and the Wharf—the Wharf is shut down. *Why?* Because there is not enough work for the staff, so all staff are getting significantly less hours to work and because the amount of clientele they get is significantly down as well, they are not getting the gratuities that they did previously.

The point that I want to underline and support Mr. Kirkconnell on, is that let us not take too long doing this, because they are real people out there who are really, really, hurting. All of us are buying and giving food cards, and we have been doing this for months and months and months. I do not believe that the Members in the Government side are immune to that and do not realise that is well. So let us not worry too much about some of these technical things while our people starve.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, just an observation.

We know Members are eager to make people know that they are on the ball, but it is not today and not since COVID, that a huge number of people in this country—in spite of the NAU assisting, meaning the Government—there has been for a long time, a huge number of our people that are having a very tough time. I know how much I give. I know you all know because you do it, too. We do not get credit. We do not get out there and say so—at least not me, because that is not my style—that we give and we give and we give from our own pocket. We know and there has to be some assessment.

This is something that I campaigned on several times; there now needs to be a full assessment, a fuller assessment than just sector—if you can get some of the sectors that we are talking about, that would be a great help—but a fuller assessment, Mr. Chairman, of what poverty levels exist and how many families.

I know the number of young women who are coming to me saying we cannot make it. They were not in tourism. Some of them were not even working, that is the problem. And now some of them are trying to, because I know they tried it with me. They are trying to harp into this thing of, *I need to get something from tourism*; but if you were not working there, you really cannot expect to get it, but that just shows the level of poverty. Young people with families; two and three children—I saw one a couple of days ago, Mr. Chairman! 26 years old, six children. No husband. I said, *well where is the father? Well, I don't know where he is. We come to you because we live in your area.*

So Mr. Chairman, I know you want me to go but I could talk on this, because this is social development; I could talk on this a long time and I know it would be relevant, except you would stop me.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yeah, yeah, tourism, but it is the same people that we are talking about. The same

people that the Member over there talked about for quite a long time—you should have stopped him—and the same one that the Minister had to reply to. There needs to be a different assessment of the poverty levels in this country and they can say, *well, where were you all this time?* Well, I was Speaker for four years and could not open my mouth.

The Chairman: Alright. This issue has been exhausted. I think everyone is in support. At this point, I will take the vote. All those in favour of an additional \$27,500,000 for TP 67 - Sports and Cultural Tourism Programmes Assistance, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 67 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: Honourable colleagues, at this point we will break for lunch and will be back at 1:30pm promptly.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, if you would just allow me please, this leeway to say that normally, the stipend would be paid on the 15th of the month as previously. I know many people have called to find out what the deal is with the July payment.

Now that we have approved that \$27 million, my team will start the process. Actually, we cannot start it until its approved and brought back to Parliament, so the July payment will be delayed at least until after Wednesday when it is fully accepted by Parliament, hence the delay with the payment; but you will get your money for July in the next few days.

The Chairman: Yeah. Alright.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chairman, I know that we're going to take a break now I think, I just want to thank the staff for—

The Chairman: You aren't finished. You have two more sections left, you know?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Oh, yeah.

The Chairman: Alright. At this point we will recess until 1:30pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:31pm

Committee resumed at 1:33pm

EI 49 - CAYMAN TURTLE CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION CENTRE LIMITED

The Chairman: Proceedings are resumed. Thank you. Please be seated.

Honourable colleagues, when we took our break we had just finished TP 67 for the amount of \$27,500,000 and now we are moving on to page 9, which is EI 49 - Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited, in the amount of \$2 million. Are there any questions?

[Pause]

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, if I read this correctly this is a shortfall in funding because of COVID?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: He is correct Mr. Chair.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I assume that the \$2 million ask will take us through to the end of year? There is no business for the Turtle Farm, so to speak, it is the anchor of jobs for the hundred-plus in the West Bay area. The number one question is to make sure that all employees are protected?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair and thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Yes, it is the PACT Administration's commitment to those employees—unless, for some other reason on work that they display in some capacity that they are not doing their job—that they will not be let go due to the short falls of COVID. We are committed to that, and hopefully we will not have to be discussing that very much longer with the successful reopening in a few months.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: So, we have an attraction that is extremely important in the country and we are making sure that the employees there are protected. You have a range of employees from the very highest paid, and I think it is 96 per cent Caymanian.

Before the election, there was an issue about employment at the Turtle Farm, with a permit that had been put in for one of the top executives and there was a feeling that there was a Caymanian that could actually hold that job. Has that permit been withdrawn or did they continue to put in a permit for that position?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair.

As the Member knows, the Minister cannot be directly involved in the hiring and firing practices but I want to thank many of the board members that were there for their tenure; most of them resigned after the formation of the PACT Administration.

Immediately, considering the circumstances that were happening there with some of the details that you highlighted, the Cabinet and Caucus appointed a new board. I am well aware that the board is trying to address some of those concerns that you are talking about without getting into too many details about employment of individuals, but the policy position of the PACT Administration is 'a Caymanian First Policy' whereby, if there is a Caymanian available for any position in respect to any entity that the Cayman Islands Government is involved with—whether it is a statutory authority or government-owned company, that Caymanians are given the first preference.

Now, I am aware of the allegation that a Caymanian was not given the first preference and the board's job is to examine that to ensure that it can be rectified, or it never happens again.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman again, I thank the Minister for the response, but the election was three months ago—this issue was being dealt with—so we are five months into this. The CEO is here and my question is: Has a permit been issued for the top executive, or was a Caymanian given the job?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. I will ask the CEO to address the House to answer those detailed questions. As the Member knows, the elected Minister is not involved in the hiring.

The Chairman: Welcome, Mr. Adam. Before you answer, can you just state your full name and title for the record? Thank you.

Mr. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited.

Chairman if I understand, the question is what is the status of a particular recruitment?

The Chairman: I will ask the Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman to repeat the question. Thank you.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you very much.

Through you Mr. Chairman, the issue is that we have a request for another \$2 million. We certainly support the Turtle Centre, their very high percentage of Caymanian employment and the dependency on those jobs during COVID.

The issue is that before the election, it was alleged that a work permit was sought for a high-ranking executive—and it was alleged that—Caymanians who were capable of doing that job had never been given an opportunity to be interviewed or shortlisted. My only question is, has a Caymanian been given an opportunity for that job or was that job filled with a work permit holder?

The Chairman: Mr. Adam.

Mr. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: Chairman, maybe I should give context; then I can answer the question directly with perhaps a little better understanding.

At the Centre we have progressively been intent on giving Caymanians opportunities for the jobs, to the extent that we have some 94 or 96 people working there and only three work permits; so we have a track record of putting a Caymanian in place whenever there is an opportunity.

That was not the percentage when I got there in 2010, but I can speak to what it is today. So if the question is, “*are we giving Caymanians opportunity?*” I think the evidence speaks for itself, Mr. Chairman.

If we are talking about a particular position—am I at liberty to speak about that, Mr. Chair? Can you help me with that?

The Chairman: I think this is a matter of guidance and I am not sure. We do not normally get into personal details here, do we?

I think it would be best if the Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman has that conversation with the Minister and the CEO off-line. I think that would probably be the best position.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you and I thank the CEO for his answer.

Mr. Chairman here is my concern: We are being asked—which we obviously support—for \$2 million to continue the good work of the Turtle Centre. If you look at the graphics of the total amount of money that you pay out, and when you fall into the three or four top executives, that becomes a higher percentage of what the actual payroll is; so I think my question is fair.

We want to make sure—especially in COVID time—if a Caymanian is available for one of these top jobs, we want to make sure that they have the opportunity to get that. I do not need to drill down not it anymore.

The Chairman: That is okay. By all means, if you want to drill, I would say drill away, because the philosophy has always been that the public business cannot be done in private.

Ask the question directly then, so the CEO can answer the question.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chairman, if I can just ask.

You are 100 per cent right Mr. Chair, that the peoples’ business cannot be done in private, but I am mindful that this is an HR matter and may cause some conflicts if the matter is aired too much, in respect to the hiring, as well as recognising that if those hires were done and a contract was awarded, there may be legal implications to that.

To note, just for the record, that any of those contracts were done before April 14th but [also to say that I will give the commitment to the Member who is asking the question, to inquire through the board to examine if there were any unfair hiring practices in respect to any senior positions over the last five months as the Member has highlighted.](#)

I know there were not any hires or renewals in the last three months. Am I correct?

Mr. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: To my knowledge, a renewal was filed some months back, but I do not believe it has been heard yet. At least it has not been settled. As I understand it, there was a deferral for further information to be provided, which it was. That is where it stands.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, if the CEO would mind. Without giving exact names, can you maybe give more information and context? Is that renewal for a position held by a non-Caymanian and whether or not Caymanians have applied for it because that is, ultimately, what the Member is asking.

Mr. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: Mr. Chairman, I am happy to answer that.

The position in question is an executive position reporting directly to me, as CEO; it was advertised, the recruitment process ran and five recruits were presented to me:

- Two required work permits;
- One a permanent resident, I believe; and
- Two were Caymanian.

I had the task of evaluating whether they measure up to what the job requires, which is articulated in the job advertisement and job description. Unfortunately, we found no Caymanian with the necessary experience, as required in the job description, which is laid out pretty clearly.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: One second. I just want to make sure if the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman is satisfied with the response.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I am certainly satisfied with that, and I thank him for that, but I do not want to interfere with the Member for West Bay.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, we have been connected to this particular issue for quite a while. It is about a particular position, I do not know whether...is it the Human Resources position?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: It is one of the high positions in the Centre which a Caymanian applied for and was/is capable of doing, but was not interviewed.

That caused a big noise if you may, with the press and the staff. Albeit it was just before elections, so feelings were running high, but we got blamed for it because there was nothing done about it, and the person who would have to be on a work permit was still in the job, albeit they made her go home while they were looking at matters—that is what I was told. I guess while the permit was submitted.

When the staff found out that it was being submitted, that heated up the situation even worse. I am not saying anything here that the Chief Operating Officer does not know but that is a problem, Mr. Chairman.

The problem is that a Caymanian, whom I think we all know—many people know him, because he moved from one Department in Government to apply for that position—was not interviewed. Yet, the person they felt was given the job was not supposed to be renewed but was being applied for—or at least they felt should not have been renewed but was not applied for—and so the gentleman was not interviewed, although he had applied. That is the position.

It was not a good situation then, and it is still not a good situation, because feelings are running high and all of us that are elected know that about positions with Caymanians and non-Caymanians and those Caymanians that are capable and feel that they need to be given an opportunity and so feelings are running very high.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you. Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chairman, for the information of the public and the honourable House: it seems as if there are some underlining issues that are going on and as I take pride in not getting involved in the hiring practices, I will instruct the board to inquire about this specific area, to see whether or not there was inappropriate handling of the hiring of this individual.

I am pleased to hear the CEO say that the renewal is deferred, or on hold, because if a Caymanian applied, it is a priority of this Administration to make sure that a qualified Caymanian is given the opportunity for that position.

I can give commitment to this Honourable House that afterwards we will have further discussions to investigate what the circumstances are, to have some resolve.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, my only question with what or who has been identified is, was the permit approved and is that approval now on appeal, or is the application for the permit sitting there, waiting to be approved?

The Chairman: CEO Adam?

Mr. Timothy Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre: Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the permit application submitted and was deferred, as I understand, for more information. That information has been provided and the permit is back to the authorities to consider grant or not.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Mr. Chairman: Because the Minister has given me an undertaking that he is going to look into it, I will honour the Minister's commitment.

The Chairman: Okay. Are there any other questions on EI 49 - Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited? If not, I will take the vote.

All those in favour of an additional \$2 million for EI 49 - Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EI 49 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

EI 82 — CAYMAN ISLANDS AIRPORTS AUTHORITY

The Chairman: Next item. EI 82 Cayman Islands Airports Authority, for \$10 million. Are there any questions?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Mr. Chairman, I have very few questions on this.

I want to compliment the Airport Authority on the work that they are doing. They have been on the front line with everybody that enters the country during COVID, and they have been part of the border reopening—the commitment from the employees and the people there, the work that they have done.

My question to the Minister is: Is he comfortable that the \$10 million will take us to the end of the year, with the reopening actually in jeopardy because of the 80 per cent requirement?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. Through you to the Member.

As per the directions of the Airport Authority's Head, I do believe this should take us through. If necessary, this Administration will come back for more; I hope that we do not, but the indication they have given to the Ministry is that it will suffice for the rest of the budget year.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you. I thank the Minister for the response and again, just to give our appreciation to the members of the Airport Authority on being on the front-line, and for the work they do. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before you wrap up this—I do not think there are any more questions—I want to say thank you so much to the staff at the Airports Authority, the Turtle Centre, Cayman Airways and Ministry staff for coming and answering all these questions.

To the Members who asked questions, I do commit to making sure I follow through with my commitments, particularly in respect to the hiring of a Caymanian—if an application was overlooked in that respect. I thank my staff and all the board members for their continued hard work.

The Chairman: Okay. With that said, can I go to the vote now? All those in favour of EI 82 - Cayman Islands Airports Authority for \$10 million, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EI 82 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASE BY THE MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OTHER EXECUTIVE EXPENSE

OE 131 — DOUBTFUL DEBT EXPENSES

The Chairman: Thank you very much. That concludes the appropriation on the schedule for the Minister of Tourism and Transport.

Honourable colleagues, we now move to page 11. There is a small item there, OE 131- Doubtful Debt Expenses, \$41,551. Are there any questions? Seeing as there are no questions, all those in favour of OE 131 - Doubtful Debt Expense for \$41,551, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: OE 131 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASE BY THE MINISTER FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND LANDS

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

TP 66 - SISTER ISLANDS HOME REPAIRS ASSISTANCE

The Chairman: Okay colleagues, we move to page 10.

We will start with appropriations for the Minister for District Administration and Lands. We start with TP 66 - Sister Islands Home Repairs Assistance, \$550,000. Are there any questions? Seeing as there are no questions, all those in favour of TP 66 - Sister Islands Home Repairs Assistance, \$550,000, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 66 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 86 - SISTER ISLANDS BEACHES AND COMMUNITY CLEAN UP PROGRAMME

The Chairman: Moving on to TP 86 - Sister Islands Beaches and Community Clean-up Programme, \$500,000. Are there any questions? Okay, no questions. I will just take the vote on that.

All those in favour of TP 86 - Sister Islands Beaches and Community Clean-up Programme, \$500,000, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 86 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

EGA 7 - EDUCATION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Chairman: Okay. We move on to page 12; EGA 7, Education Services for Students with Special Needs (SEN), \$441,107. Are there any questions?

The Chairman: Member for George Town South.

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

On the vote for the increase, vote EGA 7, increase in funding for the hiring of two teachers and four assistant teachers at the Lighthouse School, can the Minister say if these teachers have already been recruited?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chair, I am reliably informed that these positions have been advertised and the process has started with the legitimate expectation that they will be in place for the upcoming school term.

The Chairman: Thank you Minister.

The Honourable Member for George Town South.

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: Thank you Minister. My second question through you Mr. Chairman, to the Minister is: Are Caymanians going to hold any of those positions?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair at this stage it would be premature to say, as the advertisements are just out, but the policy of the Government and of course the Immigration Law, is that Caymanians should get priority so I would expect that those parameters will remain the same.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Honourable Member for George Town South.

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: Thank you Mr. Chairman. My last question on this is: Can the Minister state if these teachers will also be assisting students in our Primary and Secondary schools in terms of SEN and disabilities?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you Mr. Chair and thanks to the Honourable Member.

I understand that these six personnel are only for the Lighthouse School. We would have seen in the SPS that there is a vote for an additional 80 assistant teachers for our public schools. One of the main reasons, not the only reason, is the increased number and percentage of the SEN within our schools.

We introduced that last year in the previous administration where we got up to Grade 2, so it is a continuation of this programme up until Grade 9 to assist with those children within the schools. Obviously that will also take some capital outlay in the next budget.

The Chairman: Are there any additional questions?

The honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. I want to ask a question of the Minister.

I am sure it can be asked under this and I think it relates to what the Member for George Town South

asked. I want to delve more into counsellors and psychologists for each individual school. How is it managed now—are we still sharing counsellors between schools?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chairman, I am going to ask the Chief Officer if she would occupy the Chair to the end and respond to the Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Welcome Cetonya; for the record, can you state your full name plus your title before answering the question. Thank you.

Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education: Good afternoon. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer in the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Chair through you, some schools have full time counsellors and some have them shared. The Theoline McCoy Primary School has three days and they are looking to increase that to four. The educational psychologists are shared amongst schools. Though they are not assigned to any particular school, they do a lot of assessments for the students, in terms of identifying the special education need that they have, as well as the support services that they need.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. Through you, I would like to ask the Chief Officer if increasing the number of visits is being considered. You said the psychologists are—can you repeat that, please?

Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education: Mr. Chair, through you, some schools have full time counsellors and others have part-time counsellors, so they do a number of days at each school.

Theoline McCoy for example, had three days the last school year and we are looking to increase that to four for the school counsellors. The educational psychologists are not assigned to a particular school, but are shared between schools; they provide the assessments for students with special educational needs, as well as identify services to support those students.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

Would you consider trying to source additional resources to increase the visits, especially to the Primary schools? COVID has really caused some real stress on our children, more than we can imagine.

The Chairman: Chief Officer.

Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education: Mr. Chair through you, certainly COVID has put a lot of strain on families and by extension their children and we have seen that play out in schools with children's behaviour incidents, et cetera. The counsellors meet regularly to address those issues and there has been an increase in provision from Counselling Services in terms of the staffing that is already there to provide more contact with students who need it.

For example, if we have a child who is acting up quite a bit, there will be additional interventions for that child and sometimes that is extended to the family depending on the need.

The Chairman: Are there any additional questions? If not, I will take the vote. All those in favour of an additional \$441,107 with respect to EGS 7 - Educational Services for Students with Special Needs, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EGS 7 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 82 - SCHOLARSHIPS - SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS

The Chairman: Colleagues, we are moving to page 13, TP 82 - Scholarships - Special Education Needs. \$527,536. Are there any questions?

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, sir. Can the Minister let us know where these scholarships would be tendered, whether locally or overseas, and what sort of education?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you Mr. Chair. It is a combination thereof.

These are SEN clients; we do not currently have the capacity within our public school system so they are placed for example, at Hope Academy, or they are placed overseas and the current allocation has been exhausted. This seeks to take us through the end of December for those students that obtain the scholarships from the Education Council.

Previously it used to be under the Minister, but since taking up the Ministry in the last administration, I delegated that responsibility to the Education Council

as I did not want direct involvement with the decision as to who got scholarships and who did not.

This will cover those who we do not have the capacity for, or we do not have the specialist within our system, that would go to Hope Academy or overseas—for the most part they go to Florida.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: One follow up then through you, sir, to the Minister. Approximately how many students would be covered by this appropriation?

The Chairman: Chief Officer? Thank you.

Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education: Mr. Chair through you, there are 42 students in local placement and five in overseas placement. That number may increase throughout the school year, as more children get assessed and we understand their needs.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. What I want to ask is, does this assessment start from a certain grade for sending them overseas?

The Chairman: Chief Officer.

Ms. Cetonya Cacho, Chief Officer, Ministry of Education: Mr. Chair through you. It ranges. It depends on when the needs are presented so it can be from a very early age. We have the Early Intervention Programme, which is a unit under the Department of Education Services, and those children receive support from a very, very, young age, so, Reception and Year 1.

As the Honourable Minister said, when the services have been exhausted in the Government school system or there is no support available then we look to Private Sector Partnerships to assist those children, but this can happen at any stage in a child's education.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: This is not quite on scholarships and perhaps I should have asked it under Other Budget, but I want to inquire about what is happening with the private schools grants?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, all and sundry would perhaps be cognisant of the fact that previously there were allocations, if memory serves me right it was \$2 million, then it went to \$1 million then to \$750, which expanded just for special projects and also included the public schools. That amount is still in the budget.

The Government is under active consideration to reinstate it to the private schools. It awaits full consensus of the Caucus but I am confident that that is a work in progress, and that before too long an appropriate announcement could be made as to the amounts and the timing for implementation thereof.

In addition, during the COVID period, the previous administration allotted funds for various COVID needs and necessities and the private school was one of them. A Committee was set up and headed by Mr. Dan Scott, Mr. Darrell, I think, and some technocrats from the Ministry. Some schools did receive however, some schools did not for the mere reason that a policy decision was taken that if the school was seeing a profit, Government was not in the business of subsidising schools who were receiving a profit, so that is the current update.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, I do not sit in Caucus, but I think Members know what my position is and has long been in this House, from the day we instituted that matter of assisting private schools.

I have never been in favour of giving to every private school because the facts are that there are private schools that do not need—we know that. We are neither dumb, deaf, nor blind, so we know; but, I have always supported the system of getting the private schools—it is a main test, let us call it that—to say, *look we need this because of this, that and the other matter*, because the fact is that, regardless of whether some Members feel otherwise, it does help government.

Right now, government is turning down applications because they do not have space in the classes, unless you want to go up to 40 - 50 people a class. Now, Mr. Chairman you need to give me time on this because this is a very important matter and I need to at least vent what I know my constituents are saying and what I know; not just what I am being told, what I know—that it saves government money.

If government has to put in for all these students, then our budget grows that much larger and when you look at what some of the poorer private schools, let us say some of them are the church schools, then we realise that Government should have continued to help.

Let us say it is not \$1 million, it is not \$100,000, but whatever they give, they assist the school and in assisting the school of course they are assisting parents. I would like to know that Government is still going to assist schools. I know private schools that are having it very, very, difficult because the parents simply cannot pay that much and they cannot get in to the government schools.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister of Education.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chair, I suppose this line of questioning gives rise to a new connotation of being caught between a rock and a hard place, because I fully support, concur, and agree that private schools should be assisted because we honestly do not have the physical capacity to do so.

I have attempted on two occasions, to navigate a Cabinet paper through, hence the reason I was trying to be diplomatic in my first response and I am still trying to be as diplomatic as I can be. I have confidence that the Cabinet paper will eventually see safe passage but, as all previous Cabinets, it operates by consensus. We have not reached consensus to date but like Obama, I am always cautiously optimistic—because education is at the forefront of this Government and other Governments—that the requested \$2 million will receive approval before I bid my swan farewell in three and a half years' time.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, I know where the Minister stands because I know where she stood all these many years, but what I hope is that it is not another three and half years before we get anything for the schools, because the need is immediate.

I am sure that the Education Ministry or the Department, or whoever is going to do this work, will find that out soon enough and hopefully before the school year begins in September, God's willing.

The Chairman: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I want to thank him too, Mr. Chair on his expression of confidence that my persuasive powers would not extend to three and a half years, because my audacity for optimism is not so elastic.

The Chairman: Thank you. All those in favour of an additional \$527,536 for TP 82 - Scholarships - Special Education Needs, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 82 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: That concludes appropriations to the Ministry of Education.

Honourable colleagues, we are cooking with gas—

[Laughter]

OUTPUT GROUPS TO BE PURCHASED BY THE MINISTER FOR INVESTMENT, INNOVATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

OUTPUT SUPPLIER: MINISTRY OF INVESTMENT, INNOVATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ITI 1 - INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND REPRESENTATION OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

The Chairman: We are down to the last Ministry which is on page 6. Actually, it looks like this is the last item.

I understand the first one is ITI 1 - International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands. I understand that there have been some committee amendments to this one so I will ask the Serjeant—have they been distributed already?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: They were distributed? Okay.

Okay; at this point then I ask the Honourable Minister for Investment, Innovation and Social Development to move the motion for this Committee. Thank you.

AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEDULE OF APPROPRIATION CHANGES

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Investment, Innovation and Social Development: Thank you Mr. Chair.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 65, I, the Honourable Minister for Investment, Innovation and Social Development, hereby give notice to move the following amendments to the Schedule of Appropriation changes, first of which is are Appropriations to the Minister for Investment, Innovation and Social Development of Output Group ITI 1 - International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands, by decreasing ITI 1 by \$2 million.

I can make brief comments to explain if you would allow.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, over the years successive Governments have acknowledged that Financial Services have a significant component to international affairs. This included two previous attempts at establishing an office in Hong Kong as well as Dubai.

For a time, the London Office was under the remit of the Financial Services Ministry, but it now has a much wider remit than Financial Services. Under the prior administration—

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chair, sorry . . .

The Chairman: The Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: I really do loathe to interrupt the Minister, but I believe there is just one Motion?

The Chairman: Yep. He should just read the entire Motion, sorry.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: No, he is speaking to the motion now. He is speaking to the first part of the motion so I am saying procedurally, I think he needs to read the whole Motion, and then go back.

The Chairman: Correct. You are correct Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Okay.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, can you please read the Motion in its entirety first? Thank you.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Sure.

- **Output Group HCA 28 - Administration of Community Assistance Programmes** by introducing/adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to HCA 28, an amount of \$565,000;
- **Output Group NGS 64 - Care of the Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons** by introducing/adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to NGS 64, an amount of \$50,000;
- **Transfer Payment TP 41 - Permanent Financial Assistance** by introducing/adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to TP 41, an amount of \$900,000;
- **Transfer Payment TP 47 - Ex-Gratia Benefit Payments to Seamen and Ex-Servicemen** by introducing a reduction to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to TP 47, an amount of \$600,000;
- **Transfer Payment TP 87 - Temporary Financial Assistance** by introducing/adding to the Appropriation Schedule with respect to TP 87, an amount of \$685,000; and
- **Transfer Payment TP 96 - Micro and Small Business Grants** by introducing/adding to the

appropriation schedule with respect to TP 96, an amount of \$2,000,000 million.

The Chairman: Thank you Honourable Minister. You had brief remarks with regards to why this Motion is being moved.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, Mr. Chair.

As I commenced, over the years successful Governments have acknowledged that Financial Services has a significant component related to international affairs. There have been two prior attempts at establishing an office in Hong Kong as well as an office in Dubai.

For a time, the London Office was also under the remit of the Financial Services Ministry, although this Ministry has a much wider remit now than Financial Services.

Under the prior administration a plan was conceived to once again expand the number of overseas offices and also to include a broadened mandate for investment promotion; however, the complexities related to financial services have increased since the plan was proposed. They are now evolving international standards, and new global initiatives changing the geopolitical landscape are factors that have a real tangible impact on the framework of financial services—a main pillar of the economy.

Against that background, the PACT Government has decided to refocus the proposed overseas offices for North America, Europe and Asia and transfer the personnel operations staff to the Ministry of Financial Services, rather than being under the Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development. Investment promotion will continue as a function, but as a secondary activity.

We also acknowledge that there is a competing demand socially at home in domestic concerns, so we decided to implement a more modest approach to launch of the offices. Deployment of staff to overseas offices will probably not commence until Q4 (the last quarter) of this year in relation to North America and Europe and with a focus of maybe Q1, for Asia next year.

Two primary reasons for that are that, now that the focus is on financial services, the hired staff need to fully immerse themselves in the complex area of Regulation and Tax matters and be able to speak to it clearly, and advocate on behalf of our jurisdiction in these key areas so, jurisdiction-specific training programmes will be developed and then implemented for the staff to learn.

In addition to that, not all of the Immigration, Personal Tax Liability, and Health Insurance has been worked out for each of the proposed jurisdictions and I think all of us would agree that we would not, with the unfair reputation that we have around the world, deploy a Caymanian into a jurisdiction and not know their tax liability—that would be embarrassing for the country.

So, while that goes on and the reps are in training and we work out those matters, there will be a more modest approach and therefore this \$2 million to actually set up physical offices will not be needed in 2021 and will be built in to 2022.

We are also looking at a range of different measures to do this in a more cost effective way, one example of which is to initially cover the Brussels destination through the London Office. The London Office already has the apparatus of diplomatic and tax immunity and Brussels is only a two-hour train ride away. Also, there is a range of financial services stakeholders from Cayman who are based in London and that would give the representative the opportunity to engage with the business community and then also transport to Brussels as needed for meetings with the European Union.

In this day and age of COVID, after more business is being done online through video conferencing, we can do this and we can achieve the same goals in a more cost-effective manner. That allows us to have a reduced-cost profile for these overseas offices and allows us to spend more money in the local economy and to support small and micro businesses.

I will pause there, because I spoke for a bit.

The Chairman: Thank you very much Mr. Minister. On the issue of ITI 1 - International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands for the amount based on the revised schedule, are there any questions? The Honourable Members for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I am not sure that I understood correctly. Can I ask the Minister to help me? Is the decision now not to proceed with the opening of a European office in Brussels?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Potentially. We are looking at the cost options. If we can work out a way to land in Brussels and have already resolved the immigration tax status of the employee, we may proceed, but we are looking at all options.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: The reason that I ask, Mr. Chairman, is that we had very clear advice that with the UK having now left the European Union, the ability of the UK itself to assist us is greatly diminished, with respect to issues in which the European Union is involved.

I know I do not need to tell the Minister or indeed the Premier, how critically important it is that we have good intelligence, good advice, and good advocacy. Particularly in the times that we are in and all of the pressing matters that this jurisdiction and others

have to face. I am very concerned at trying to run the EU end from the London Office.

I was Premier for eight years and previous to that I held responsibility for financial services in another administration and I know it is just not adequate. Hence the reason why we took the decision with the advice also of the industry here to get boots on the ground in Brussels. I appreciate that there may be logistical issues, which the Minister has spoken to, but I really would urge the Government, above all of the other offices, to do everything they possibly can to get us an office in Brussels, where the amount of advocacy that is necessary can be done.

Virtually all of the European Union States have offices in Brussels; we operated for many years with the very sage advice of an Advocacy Lobbyist Group in Brussels, but the strong feeling when I was there, was that it was no longer adequate. It is a matter for the Minister and the Government's judgment, but I just want to put that out there because we are in for some really, really, rough weather over the next little while.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member from West Bay just give the Honourable Minister a chance to respond to those comments. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you Mr. Chair, and I thank the Member. I will try to assist the Member in two ways:

1. I think the decision has not been made yet. We are just looking at a range of options to be able to accomplish it, and to be able to do it in Brussels is not off the table yet; that is number one.
2. COVID has completely changed the way that we conduct and do business. In my time as a representative to the UK and Europe, [meetings with] a number of the persons and offices that you would have to liaise with in Europe, by virtue of COVID, are now done by video conference, anyway. There is not as much urgency for in-person meetings now, so in the time we resolve immigration and tax matters and are able to deploy our people safely, a number of initiatives can be accomplished.

We were able to be removed from the EU List of Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes all via Teams and Zoom, so I do not think that it is a stretch for six months, as we launch the offices properly, to be able to engage with the EU effectively in this time period.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Chairman. Is this a matter of somebody already having been hired, or contracted, for this position? Is this something that has already happened?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you for that question.

Upon taking office, I was advised that there were three full representatives already hired for North America, Asia and Europe/Brussels. There are also two Deputies that were hired just before we were sworn in as Ministers—one for North America and another one for Asia. There has been no Deputy for Europe/Brussels that I am aware of.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: A follow up, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Perhaps I did not quite hear. There were four positions contracted before the new Administration took Office? Is that what is being said?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Chronologically that is correct, and it was five positions.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Am I understanding correctly that the offices are primarily for financial services, but the persons who were hired do not have a background in financial services? Is that what I understood?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: With respect, I do not know that we necessarily need to delve into that matter.

The staff that were hired were there when we met them. They were hired under more of a mandate for investment promotion, which is why we are taking the prudent step. As the Member for Red Bay has rightly said, and we are acutely aware, the issues we are facing from an Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Tax perspective are serious, and we have to take the hired staff—these are energetic, capable Caymanians—and require them to undergo rigorous training on the financial services, so they can articulate and advocate intelligently on behalf of the country.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, if I can assist.

When the idea for the establishment of more offices overseas was conceived, those offices were to have a broader remit than it appears the new Government is now thinking they should have. They were to be essentially gateways for investment into Cayman and for the promotion of these Islands. It was always understood that the Brussels office was quite different from the offices in Hong Kong and Washington, DC because of the fact that the UK had withdrawn from the European Union and we needed more direct representation there. Indeed, the greatest threats and challenges to our industry emanate from the European Union.

Now, as it seems, the Government is taking a different view about the principal function of these offices. They may need to rethink the kind of personnel they recruit for the offices, but our view was much broader than narrow financial services. That is why I pushed for the creation of the Office of International Trade and Investment. We were looking at creating, as I said, more gateways for the flow of investment and business into these Islands. That was to be the broad function of the three offices.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister for Investment.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think those are helpful comments; the only thing that I would add is that quite a lot has happened since that proposal.

The Cayman Islands were added to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Grey List in January, which has a knock-on effect to add us to consequential high-risk listing of the jurisdiction. The issue that will always be above us—which we have seen recently when we had to add substance to partnerships—is the EU's List for Non-Cooperative Jurisdictions for Tax Purposes is not going away anytime soon.

In addition to that, we also have to grapple with the proposal by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and G-20 of a Global Corporate Minimum Tax. All of those are now moving at a much-faster rate than at the time this proposal was initially pitched.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, the idea of having overseas representation is not new; in fact, it started many years ago and then it was stopped. It has been for financial services, to attract business and to be able to represent Cayman from that standpoint. I always used to tell them that somebody needed to be around the table overseas.

I am still not understanding, because this announcement about opening offices was made two or three years ago and I never heard anything more. We know when COVID came down, everything was shut down but if I remember correctly, it was a couple years before that that this was announced and I would like to find out how we are just getting to this point now.

When were these contracts given? How were they given? Who—well, we cannot say who, but when did we get to this point?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister of Investment.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: The point and the history was mentioned by the Member for Red Bay as to how they were proposed under the former administration. As I mentioned, to my understanding, the timing of the contracts for the current hired staff was around the middle of April of this year for the majority of the contracts.

I take the Member for Red Bay's point that now that the focus has shifted due to enlarged global challenges, it is also for some of the engaged staff to think about whether this is something they signed up for, if they are now moving into a more specialist Financial Services roles. That is something that the Ministry of Financial Services is working through with the engaged personnel, but that is the history as I know it.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: In answer to the question posed by the Honourable Speaker, we created the new Ministry of International Trade and Investment, Aviation and Maritime Affairs a couple of years ago. The idea of more international offices was something that we talked through with industry reps.

We actually commissioned a group of them to go away and do a report—because initially we were just thinking about Hong Kong and Brussels—and they recommended that we proceed with Hong Kong. The jurisdiction tried Hong Kong twice and I was deeply conscious of that. As things started to heat up and it became clear that the UK was going to leave the EU, the pressure came for representation in Brussels, and as we talked the issue through with the industry, there was strong recommendation that we needed representation in Washington to deal with the North American end of the challenge.

The processes involved in setting these offices up and getting staff has been ongoing for quite some time. As all Members will know, the elected Government ought not to get involved in personnel recruitment issues, simply agreeing what the broad parameters of the jobs should be. From there the Civil Service Representatives, the Chief Officer in particular, took the matter forward.

That is all I can help with.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: All I can offer to that is that, to my understanding, recruitment did not start until January of this year.

The Chairman: Okay.

The Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair.

The Minister said that the contracts were signed right before the Government was sworn in. I guess the Civil Service can do the hiring when an election is going on because I am hearing that contracts were signed the day before/after elections. Can the Minister confirm the circumstances in respect to that?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Well, I would not be able to confirm those circumstances because they existed before I was sworn in, but I can just go over the chronology as I understand it, that you are correct—the contracts were signed around the election period, before we were sworn in.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you Mr. Chair. Can the Minister enlighten this Committee as to the logic of the Ministry of Investment having its own vehicle as per—

The Chairman: I do not think that question would be related to this vote.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Yes sir, it falls under the Ministry of Investment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: I am looking at the particular line item. I think we are going outside the line item in that regard.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, I let it go since I have been here, but in twenty and a half years of sitting in this House, I have never seen one Minister questioning another in a Finance Committee, and I caution the Minister and the team because it can get very, very, messy because Ministers are bound by collective responsibility.

The Chairman: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Red Bay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chair, with all due respect, I see that the Member for Red Bay is highlighting “myself asking myself” the question, but as you said Mr. Chair, the Government business is not going to be done in the dark in this Administration. Maybe asking such

questions now shows the difference between this type of administration and the last two.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member for West Bay West Central.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, some years ago it was a policy that you could not enter certain contracts—huge contracts—two or three months before election, maybe six months with some Governors, even though Civil Servants would be the ones doing it, because they are the ones supposed to be doing it.

There were certain contracts that you did not go into around the election period; and as I said, we do have a different constitution now. Is that still in vogue or not?

The Chairman: I do not know who exactly that question is being posed to—

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: To the Chair.

The Chairman: What I can say, Honourable Member for West Bay West, is that we have before us several items to vote on and before the questions start getting all over the place, I am just going to take the vote now and wrap this session up.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I have a question.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, sir. Through you to the Minister.

Understanding that these people have now been hired, what is the state of play with regard to them, because I understand many of them have vacated posts, and/or given up employment?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: So they are doing training locally, because I understand that maybe one even left the Island?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister. One more statement.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Could you please formulate the question?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I am trying to understand the state of play with regard to the persons that have been hired because I am

aware that at least one member and others were selling homes and packing up and moving; this change may have taken place subsequent to that. Will they continue to be on the government payroll in terms of what will happen to them between now and when a decision is made?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I have left that in the capable hands of the Chief Officer for Financial Services who is working through each employee's situation. They are continuing to be paid and working to transfer over.

In respect to those who may have already vacated the jurisdiction, they are being made aware of the process and the terms in which they may have to return to the Island to complete training, but I suppose the point that you raised sort of highlights what the Member for West Bay West said, that engaging staff during that particular period, without knowing the new government's priority, would present these sorts of challenges.

I can undertake, if it would satisfy the Member for West Bay West, to have a review of the particular point that you are making in relation to the timing of hiring or entering into contracts, not just for this situation but for all of us, so that no further administration would find themselves in this position again; and also not just as the administration but to your point, Member for George Town South, the staff that might be affected during that time period where a new administration has not had a chance to set its feet in its priorities.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. At this time, all those in favour of reducing ITI 1 - International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands by \$2,000,000;

All those in favour of increasing HCA 28 - Administration of Community Assistance Programmes, \$565,000;

All those in favour of NGS 64 being increased by \$50,000;

All those in favour of TP 41 being increased by \$900,000;

All those in favour of TP 47 Ex-Gratia Benefit Payments to Seamen and Ex-servicemen, decreased by \$600,000;

All those in favour of TP 87 - Temporary Financial Assistance being increased by \$685,000;

All those in favour of TP 96 - Micro and Small Business Grants being increased by \$2 million, please say Aye—

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Mr. Chairman, when did we agree to do these in block?

The Chairman: Sorry—

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, we thought you were going to take the vote on the first one.

The Chairman: All those in favour of decreasing ITI 1 - International Engagement and Representation of the Cayman Islands by \$2,000,000 million, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes and one audible No.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, can we call for a division sir?

The Chairman: Sure, no problem. Madam Clerk?

Division No. 1-2021/2022

Ayes

Hon. G. Wayne Panton
 Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan
 Hon. Sabrina T. Turner
 Hon. Johany S. Ebanks
 Hon. André M. Ebanks
 Hon. Bernie A. Bush
 Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks
 Mr. Isaac D. Rankine
 Ms. Heather D. Bodden
 Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly
 Hon. W. McKeeva Bush

Noes

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart
 Mr. Joseph X. Hew
 Hon. Alden McLaughlin
 Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour
 Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell
 Ms. Barbara E. Connolly

Absent: Mr. David Wight.

The Chairman: The result of the Division is: 11 Ayes, 6 Noes, and 1 Absentee.

Agreed: ITI 1 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

HCA 28 - ADMINISTRATION OF COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are looking at HCA 28 - Administration of Community Assistance Programmes being increased by \$565,000. Are there any questions?

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chair, just to suggest that maybe we can take a block vote for HCA 28, NGS 64, TP 41, TP 47, TP 87. We have a question on TP 96. Everything but the TP 96.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

All those in favour of HCA 28, Administration of Community Assistance Programmes, increase of \$565,000,

NGS 64, Care of the Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chairman, I do apologise. I seem to find myself afool of my colleague from Red Bay again asking my colleague a question about the monies and this is only because of the fact of the inferences drawn before about the persons in need for assistance and highlighting the fact that this is a tremendous increase in the Needs Assessment Unit area to help persons who are in need.

Can the Minister just give us a down low as to why this large amount of money is being allocated to the Needs Assessment Unit as it became a hot topic earlier today?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister of Investment.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I was happy to take the vote and thank staff, but I am more than happy to speak to it.

It will be no surprise to any of the Members in this Chamber that due to a range of complex socio-economic factors brought on by COVID, it has made the circumstances for the vulnerable even worse and more acute, particularly, older persons, those who are differently abled, and those who are unemployed and low income families.

I think it speaks to a discussion that occurred prior to the lunch break; I do not think we as a country have addressed the long-standing generational poverty issues that exist in this country, and because of that COVID has exacerbated the situation.

So, looking ahead, asking the NAU Director as to what the needs would be and when she would predictably run out of money, I was advised that that would be about September of this year. So rather than wait to have to call another Finance Committee, it was [best] just to grab the bull by the horns and bite the bullet and get the funding that is needed now.

I would also add that I am really pleased to see the work of pairing social development with innovation. This funding is but a bridge to what we would like to reform and reimagine welfare in this country. Already, with the work of a brilliant team led by Ian Tibbetts under e-government, being able to show and work collaboratively with the Needs Assessment Unit staff about how services can be digitised, how mobile applications can be employed; and how there can be online registers to make things easier for our most vulnerable to apply for services.

So, the idea was to simply seek the funding that is required as a bridge now and not over fund it, while we work through our reforms and have passed modern legislation. The longer term future is that hopefully we are not back here over time, that we are seeing a reduction in this budget by a joint approach between the Needs Assessment Unit, the Department of

WORC and also Children and Family Services but we do see the need for the funding now so, why wait? Let us get what we need now for our people.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman I am glad to see that the Tourism Minister is getting ahead of me with sorting out this problem and he knows I appreciate that. I thank the Minister for his comments and I think we all agree that the safety net for the country is one that has holes in it and obviously you are reviewing it and looking at how we can sort that out.

On a daily basis, I have representation of needs and needs not getting answered as quickly as possible—that has nothing to do at this point with the Tourism stipend. The main complaint I get is about the assessment process, that they have to be assessed before they can receive any type of help; but the truth is that if they were assessed three months ago, it is pretty easy, from my thought process, that nothing changed for them in three months, so they cannot get anything for two or three weeks until an assessment is done and then they are awarded where they were before.

I know the Minister has a lot of experience with this and I am sure that you have probably seen some of these examples as well, but I think that at this point, because of COVID and other issues in the community, if you could look into that specific assessment... I will drill down a little bit: in an assessment you have to go to the bank and get a letter but if you did not have anything three months ago, you got less now. You have a whole process of letters that have to be signed and the staff and the complement of workers that you have in that part of your Ministry work extremely hard and they try every day to get this done.

Secondly, it may be an issue of not enough human capital to address it, so we are certainly voting in support of giving more funds if human capital or whatever is needed. I leave it with you to try to see if that is something that you can entertain and look at getting help quicker.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister of Investment.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I thank the Member for his helpful comments and I could not agree more. We are looking and analysing the entire process, from beginning to end, to see what can be expedited.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. André M. Ebanks: For example, we know of cases in which the persons who are vulnerable are coming for assistance but need to complete the application with documentation that government already has

in another department, so what we are doing with innovation is seeing how that data sharing can happen automatically, so that you can reduce the process and the red tape so we can get to a decision quicker.

I am quite pleased to see, in just a few weeks, with the combination of e-Government, how they can enhance the process. *I certainly undertake to do as much as we can to get needs met as quickly as we can, so that we get help to those who need it as fast as possible.*

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you Mr. Chair. I want to put on record that I applaud the work that the Needs Assessment team is doing. I know the job cannot be easy from some of the stuff I have been hearing in terms of persons attending their offices.

I receive representation every day in terms of rent not being paid on time; I thought that we had delved into this situation and tried to sort it by doing direct deposits, et cetera. I do not know if you all are receiving that same information, but I know there is a myriad of persons who do not want to rent to NAU anymore because they say they do not get their funds on time. I do not know whether this is true or not. I guess someone can say.

If we have identified and vetted clients who we rent from, what is wrong with pre-paying them? I am sure the need will always be there that we can always use up the funds whether we overpaid or whatever else, but once that is a client that we have vetted and is in our pool, it does not sound very good for us as a Government not paying the rent.

In essence, they come to us as Representatives to try to pay the rent until government or NAU can pay it. I am wondering if you all or the Department are getting the same complaints.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Social Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you Mr. Chair.

As far as I know, the direct deposit is on and still working. The issue relates to what I was talking to the Member for Cayman Brac West about—the process to get to the payment. Sometimes, because of the length and complexity of the process, the client might not be fully aware of the paperwork that is needed.

For those who are able, we are trying to reengineer the process to make it simple and have a database that automatically prompts the client on their phone to send in particular documents, without having to travel down to NAU. There will still be paper applications for those who are more vulnerable and maybe not IT savvy, but if we can get there which, as far as I can see working with e-Government is highly possible, the

documents will get in on time and then the payment can be made.

So I think the payment channel part is solved; it is the due diligence leading up to the process that the Member from Cayman Brac West was discussing, that is the issue.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair I thank you and I thank the Minister for that response. I really appreciate those efforts in trying to move towards an easier process.

Is there any consideration then, Mr. Chair through you, to reassessing persons within three-months, especially during the time of COVID, when less job opportunities are available; should we not move to assessment every six months rather than every three months?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think what we need to move to, which is a wider issue than that, is what has not happened yet, which the new Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development is working on: actually categorising the clients in teams of Elderly, Vulnerable, Under-employed or Unemployed and Youth.

In those categories you can then create parameters and more freedom of when you are going to assess because in your example, there might be someone who is either vulnerable or differently-abled or elderly where you know their circumstance is never going to change, so what we need to do is actually mine the data of exactly who is poor. Why are they poor and where are the stats. Once you have done that data-driven exercise, we can then build criteria in new legislation that have different courses for different horses, but that is not what is happening right now. It is much more of a one size-fits-all process, which is not necessarily appropriate in this modern age of distributing financial assistance.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair I just want to go on record to say I appreciate the response from the Minister. I think, moving in this direction, we should get some positive results. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Just a short follow up to that.

You talk about how you are going to streamline it and you're going to do that through tech. I want to ask if you have considered the human element of dealing with the elderly, especially.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister of Social Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: In what respect?

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I think one of the things that the elderly really depend on is human interaction with who is helping them and if you have not, I know you will. I would just say we will support if you have to get more human capital because of the involvement and the support that the person-on-person gives.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good point, different Department. That would be under the Department of Children and Family Services who have an Elderly Teams Unit but we are looking forward in our new budget whether or not they need more staff for 2022 for that kind of care because the elderly are not only important, all of us are going to get there so we would all like to have that safety net when we get there. And I know what you are about to say, I didn't mean it against you, sir.

[Laughter]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Some before others.

The Chairman: I know Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman had the highest average voter age of 57 in the last election, which was the highest of the nineteen constituencies so I guess the questions from the Member are very valid with regards to the demographics of the people that he represents.

With that said, we'll take the block vote now as suggested by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

All those in favour of HCA 28 - Administration of Community Assistance Programmes being increased by \$565,000;

All those in favour of NGS 64 - Care of Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons being increased by \$50,000;

All those in favour of TP 41 - Permanent Financial Assistance being increased by \$900,000;

All those in favour of TP 47 - Ex-Gratia Benefit Payments to Seamen and Ex-servicemen being increased by \$600,000;

All those in favour of TP 87 - Temporary Financial Assistance being increased by \$685,000 please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Which one?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: TP 47 was a reduction, yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Oh, sorry. Just for clarity; TP 47 - Ex-Gratia Benefit Payments to Seamen and Ex-service-men is actually decreased by \$600,000. I just want to clarify that.

Agreed: HCA 28, NGS 64, TP 41, TP 47, TP 87 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

TP 96 - MICRO AND SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS

The Chairman: Last item, Honourable colleagues; TP 96 - Micro and Small Business Grants being increased by \$2 million. Are there any questions?

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to know from the Minister if this is continuation funding for existing programmes or are these new programmes? If they are new programmes, can he give us an indication of what the programmes are and the amounts for it?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister of Social Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you for the question.

This comes about, and I think it is connected to, a discussion we had before the lunch break in terms of how do we help those who are on the front line of tourism because they need assistance right now. So, with this Government taking the decision that we do not necessarily need \$2 million for physical office space for the overseas offices this year, we as a Government decided how we could utilise those funds locally for those who are on the front line.

We have had strong representations from the Land and Sea tour operators that they are hurting. They are heavily leveraged in their assets before reopening so this is a programme for at least three months, to provide grants for small and micro businesses who are on the frontline of land and sea operations, based on the assets that they have registered. To try to get them payments at least for the next three months. We may have to come back, depending on the timing of re-opening but they need relief right now.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Just to ask for confirmation, this is geared specifically towards tourism-related businesses?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, sir; and specifically in relation to those who have assets such as boats, jet skis, horses, and buses. We have met with them and they are all very appreciative of all the grants that happened before, but I believe that that income went to them personally—so that they could personally survive. What they have not had were those specifically geared towards their assets so they could make those payments. So, they received the tourism stipend which is enough for household expenses, but not enough to actually have their assets.

Let us just say, hypothetically, God-willing, the reopening happens in September/October, they might not be in a position by then to actually have assets so bookings might come in, but they might not have the assets to actually run the charter or the tours which would then be nonsense, because they would have lost that and ended up at NAU, which we just cannot have. So we need to put them in a position to get them ready for reopening.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thanks to the Minister for that clarification.

So, if I am hearing you correctly sir, it is a very narrow use of the funds; primarily to help them maybe to pay loans, you know, for their assets?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: What we are going to do is look at all the assets and work with them as we write the programme and, if we can, have more flexibility to offer them help in other areas.

I took on the point earlier about the Music Association; if there is a residual amount that can be used, we would rather use the funds very wisely, but the primary focus, which I thought they made a compelling argument to our Caucus about, is what happens to their assets. They might be okay as a household but they need their assets, otherwise they are out of business when we reopen.

The Chairman: Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman I thank the Minister for the update. I think he indicated that this would not affect the individuals—many of them are individuals trading as—this would not affect their tourism stipend if they have not found other employment, but there are those who have found employment for themselves, but still have one or two staff that they try to keep on to maintain the boats and vehicles and in case they get a weekend charter locally and stuff.

I think it is important to know that a lot of those persons, even though perhaps they were employed even before COVID, or found employment after, were

using the stipend to pay those staff, to keep them on and try and help them survive because their staff may not qualify for the stipend as being non-Caymanian. So, if I am understanding it correctly, they will have an opportunity to make up, in areas where they may have lost the stipend, to find further support through this programme, including staffing?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, because the stipend is geared toward the business.

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman to ask the Minister how quickly will this become available?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: As fast as you vote yes and we can get out of here.

[Laughter]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I would have done it a long time ago, you know that. Do you really believe that \$2 million is enough for this programme?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Initially yes, as again, it is hinged on the reopening, but these numbers are based on the representation that these operators made to Caucus and their projections of what is on the books in terms of assets.

If reopening is unfortunately delayed and we have to go back to replenish the programme, then we will need to do that but as of right now, this will be a major boost for them over the next three months.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank the Minister.

We are certainly in total support. We would again, vote for more money than the \$2 million, because I, personally, and the Opposition believe that more than that will be needed. Again, we look at and realise that these are businesses that were working at their maximum when COVID started and hit.

Our biggest concern is this: These are businesses that each person worked extremely hard to build—they are generational businesses. We know them all and they are going to be put in a very uncompetitive situation because they are going to take two or three years at least to recoup the losses that they have made trying to keep their doors open, trying to keep their boats up, trying to keep the taxis working, or trying to keep the tour working. So I would ask you, if you would consider looking at the moratorium on the WIZ licenses to continue to protect the North Sound boat

operators and those tourism-related businesses that depend on Stingray City and the North Sound.

Also, look at how we can accommodate the micro and small businesses, and let us not forget that there are some larger businesses that are involved here that are really hurting, and how we can protect them. An example of that being that they are no longer competitive—they are trying to pay off debt. They cannot reinvest. They have no capital available to buy new boats or new whatever but somebody just shows up and starts a new business and they are uncompetitive with that business.

So, if you would consider looking at some period of moratorium that protects them to get back into the business of tourism.

Point of Elucidation

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Chairman, just as a matter of clarity. We have already announced that we put a moratorium on that—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: My apologies, Mr. Chairman. Just to let the Member know that we announced our intention to do that at the last press conference. It is just a matter of process and the Premier can speak to it.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

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

In terms of the clarification, there has been no moratorium put in place in relation to the WIZ licenses but that is something that we are currently contemplating and working through the process to ascertain how we can put that in place. The consideration and possible implementation of that will be imminent.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Premier very much for that. It is welcome to hear and that is part of the question, but there was another part.

I do not know if you are saying that that has already been announced but if it has, I am extremely happy to hear it but the request and the consideration from the Minister responsible was that he entertained the idea of protecting Caymanian businesses who are at risk and have been out of business for a year and a half trying to keep their boats floating, trying to keep their buses, and tour operators intact and they are now uncompetitive. When you realise that it is going to take them two or three years to recoup where they were and

pay off debt that they've accumulated because of COVID, through no fault of their own.

The uncompetitive situation is if somebody decides to compete with them and starts a business that is capitalised better; they are then ahead of the game and ahead of the Caymanian that is generational in this industry.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister for Social Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes. The answer is yes.

This was an opportunity to put forward a programme related to assets which had not really been done before. Now that we have seen that we would have support from the Opposition with this type of consideration, I am happy to take it forward and consider other options.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I want to thank the Minister for that answer. We are in total support of that. Thank you so much.

The Chairman: Okay.

All those in favour of TP 96 - Micro and Small Businesses Grant being increased by \$2 million, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 96 approved to stand part of the Schedule to the Bill.

The Chairman: Honourable colleagues, that pretty much brings us to the end of the Committee meeting. We will meet again on Wednesday, 21st July 2021 to review the report of the Committee and the Minutes of the Committee's deliberations—sorry, Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I indicated to you that I needed to raise a matter of the hurricane and emergency shelters. I hope, Mr. Chairman, that I can get some assistance here.

Mr. Chairman, because you have been here you know that we have been talking about this for a while. In our community like others, I guess, in the district of West Bay we do not have anything much of hurricane shelters. When we got the funds to do so, we chose to build the school hall because that was needed and that could supplement whenever we have any kind of emergency. Well, that proved so but time has moved on.

The district has grown to where we now have just about, by last indication, over 13,000 people. Several churches had fallen down in Hurricane Ivan and ever since that, we have been trying to come to grips with assisting them; *where did that idea come from?* It came from Bodden Town getting assistance for theirs, and that took so long—I think they just started back on that. We cannot really put it back anymore, Mr. Chairman.

The Chapel Church of God has written several letters saying what their position is, they are willing to agree with Government that the building would be used in time of an emergency, such as a hurricane.

The New Testament Church did the same thing. The Adventists did the same thing; they went ahead and were meeting in the school hall for years and that caused all kinds of promise. So was the New Testament with charges and fees and thank God that the Adventists got to the point where they were able to move in but they made a request for, I think it was over \$100,000. Yes, about a hundred thousand dollars and while they were promised, that did not materialise. Yet, anyway.

So Mr. Chairman, I know that we recognise the situation that we have in our communities and as I said, other districts might have it, but certainly we have a serious need. We have some situations that can remedy. I have always maintained that if Government assists these, and gets a written agreement from them, then these people maintain the place, so Government does not have that to worry about over the years and over time.

However, we have got to get to the point Mr. Chairman, where we do something about it and I know that there are letters in the Ministry of Finance—I managed to get one copy, because my phone got all messed up. It has to be that the messages and WhatsApps that come to me from Government or anybody else, goes to Miami, goes to London and then comes back to me and I still cannot get them at times. I do not know what happens there; you can believe that there are many emails that get lost, but I do have this one, and I am going to ask the Premier just to pass it across.

You will find the letters there because as recently as December, I wrote to the present Leader of the Opposition and he promised that they would put it to bring it forward in election. Well, he is not in that position now but he is in a position to vote, if it came to that; but Mr. Chairman, I cannot make the case any stronger. I have made it for many years. They are in need of the assistance. It is a good plan, because we as a Government do not have to keep it up but we will have an agreement where we can utilise it.

Finally, as I said, it looks like Bodden Town is being completed and so that whole programme that I put forward came off of the Bodden Town programme. I am hoping that the Government can find some funding and even if it is not all that is requested, that we will give

them some funding to provide for emergency things that they would need like the generator, kitchen equipment, et cetera.

Thank God the New Testament Church is hard working, as those people do not have huge incomes. They are locked up so far, but are still in need of a lot and are outstanding in costs and I would hope even though they are locked up...

The Chapel Church of God is still not able to move in into anywhere. I hope we can get to the point where we will satisfy the Adventists with the promise that we made.

Mr. Chairman, before I move on to the next item maybe you would say something on that, because the next item is another one that was voted upon here but I do not think we got anywhere with it, and I want to raise it.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Do I raise that or wait until afterwards?

The Chairman: Let me just comment on the first item.

First of all Honourable Speaker, thanks very much for raising this issue. As a Government, we are aware of the shortage of shelter spaces. I recall from a presentation that we received, that we only have 8 per cent capacity on Grand Cayman, so there is definitely a need for more shelter spaces.

As with anything else, the wants are unlimited but the needs are a little bit different; but on what I can give you and this Honourable House is assurance that [I will speak with the relevant Minister with regards to this issue and see what can be done in terms of the budget going forward, to see what we can set aside.](#)

[I can commit to that undertaking that we will take a serious look at it in that vein.](#)

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Which Ministry would it would come under?

The Chairman: Under the Ministry of Social Development and this would fall for us under Broad Outcome 3, where we look at heavy investment at the community level.

So yes, like I said I will discuss this with the Minister, because the entire shelter issue across Grand Cayman is something for every district. It is not just a West Bay issue.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: No.

The Chairman: It is a Bodden Town issue. It is a George Town. It is a North Side, East End issue and Cayman Brac and Little Cayman issue to some extent, so it is something that is high on our priority, especially now during hurricane season.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: The historical fact is that when it came time and that I had any executive authority, we needed a school hall terribly because we were using the Town Hall in West Bay and so, we took the decision that if we built the school hall, we would be able to utilise it at least for when we have an emergency; but then so many things happened. We just cannot utilise the school hall because the school has grown and needs that hall even more so. That is why we did not really put forward a ready-built hurricane shelter.

I have put forward also—and I can only speak for West Bay because we do not have anything else that is public besides that, place like how Bodden Town has a civic centre and that building. . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: What happened to that building then? Cannot even be used, but at least you are doing something with the Chapel Church.

The Chairman: We are aware that, like I said, across Grand Cayman, the hurricane shelter space is at 8 per cent, which is wholly inadequate.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Very inadequate.

The Chairman: This is something that we need to look at; and you said you had a second issue to discuss?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, I will deal with two in one.

I put forward to look at a building, and I have spoken to the Minister for an Emergency Shelter in the Boatswain Bay area—an unfinished building. That being said Mr. Chairman, I am asking again if we can look at the Superior Auto programme.

Mr. Chairman, we know that that was and still is a viable programme and we got to the point where I brought it here and Members supported it to the point of the \$300,000 that they needed. It was agreed that they did not have to register because that was one of the things that the Attorney General verified in Finance Committee and we agreed to get the funds— \$150,000 in 2020 and \$150,000 in 2021 for the programme. Well, nothing has been done so far.

Mr. Chairman I would ask you to look at it and hopefully get back to the point. That has worked; we know it can work, we know it has served the community and we believe that we should do that. Finance Committee said yes. Mind you, this one can change its mind.

The Chairman: The Honourable Minister of Education, do you care to comment on the issue raised by the Honourable Member for West Bay West?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: My first response is no, but the response is that there is in fact

\$300,000 that the previous Finance Committee had voted. It is still in the Ministry's budget and it is due to expire at midnight on 31st December.

I asked for a legal opinion to be obtained and it was opined. However, I am reliably informed that the Education Council, and the technocrats as well, require that the institution be registered in accordance with their understanding of the Education Law, 2016.

Meetings were held with the proprietor Superior Auto and they are not minded to register it, so we have met an impasse. It is my latest understanding that it was to be discussed at Caucus tomorrow.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Okay. That tells me as much as I can want for at this time, except that if I was leading, I would you to tell the whole world this: No Education Council in the world can tell me that that is not a good programme; that it is not workable. That something cannot be done to find the right place for that. They do not take their test, they go all the way to Jamaica—or that is how they used to do it—to the German school in Jamaica and do their test and pass their test, because that is a registered institution well known throughout the Caribbean. So there will not be any Council stopping me, but I do not have any more to say, than what I am saying here right now.

The Chairman: Alright, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I notice that the Minister has taken it as far as she could go and I want to say thanks to her because that happened in the last Government administration as well, that they had that; but the Attorney General came in Finance Committee and told us, that it does not have to be registered for Government to give it the grant. That was his ruling.

The Chairman: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Honourable Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Chairman, can I crave your indulgence to get a little clarity on something?

The Strategic Policy Statement noted that the Government has taken the decision to draw down the contingent loan that the Government which I had the honour to lead, had arranged; and that it proposed to spend \$200 million of that in the course of the 2021 calendar year and another \$100 [million] or \$130 [million] I believe, I cannot remember correctly, in 2022.

What I am struggling with, procedurally, is: Finance Committee approved the borrowing of that money, so that bit of it is done, but nothing has been said in the course of these Finance Committee proceedings that explains how that \$200 million is to be appropriated; and, as far as I am aware, Finance Committee would have to approve those individual appropriations in the same way that we have approved these.

Beyond that, these appropriation changes that are sought total, I think, some \$94 million, maybe a little

more than that now, not \$200 million, so I would be grateful—as I am sure colleagues will be as well—for an explanation in relation to how that is being handled.

The Chairman: Thank you very much Honourable Member for Red Bay. Quickly, just a correction to your initial statement: We are not *spending* \$200 million this year, we had approval to drawdown up to \$230 million for this year and \$100 million for next year based on the \$330 [million].

At present, what I can say is that the only thing that we would have to do—which I believe we have until Wednesday to confirm—is to drawdown US \$10 million just to keep the facility alive; and at this point, that is the only thing that we will be committing to, just looking at where our cash is at this point.

We went on the event that, considering that we are living in a hurricane belt, that if need be or if any emergencies popped up, we would have the ability to draw the funds, but as it stands right now, it is not our intention to draw it if we do not need it but to keep the facility alive, I have instructed the Honourable Financial Secretary to write to the syndicate, that we will draw the US \$10 million as required in the facility to keep it alive. Then, as we plan through our forecasted expenditures and everything, we will actually see if it is needed, but what we did was take the decision to get the approval from the UK in the event—again, we live in a hurricane belt, this is hurricane season—that if something did pop up, we have the ability to draw the funds if we needed.

What I can say to you is that we are not anxious to incur any interest expense if we do not need to. That was just to draw down the funds, not to spend the funds.

Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you very much. I am happy with that.

The Chairman: Just for the record, on page 43 of the SPS we spoke about the particular issue you raised.

With that being said, I just want to thank the Honourable Ministers for answering questions and the Honourable Members of the Opposition for your questions; and thanks to all public servants for assisting the Finance Committee with its deliberations today.

Proceedings of Finance Committee are now suspended. We restart in the large Committee room of the House to consider the Report and the Minutes at 10:00am, Wednesday. Once this is done, the Parliament will resume most likely after lunch on Wednesday, to receive the report of the Finance Committee.

I shall Table the Committee's report in Parliament most likely on Wednesday afternoon and I want to thank—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Well, we can just do 10:00 because it is just the Committee report and then just go off to

lunch. I thought about 9:00 but—if Members want to come at 9, then that is fine.

So, you want to do 9am or 10am? I am fine either way. It is just to give—

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Mr. Chairman, it is probably best to meet at 9:00am so that if there is anything to do, it will not be a draw out of our session. There should not be a long one on Wednesday.

The Chairman: Okay. So, 9 o'clock on Wednesday Finance Committee will reconvene in the large Committee room to review the Reports of the Committee.

Thank you all very much, this Committee is now suspended until 9:00am on Wednesday. Thank you all very much.

At 3.32 p.m. the Standing Finance Committee adjourned until 9.00 a.m. on Wednesday, July 21st, 2021.