



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Sitting of the Third Meeting 2022-2023 Session

Thursday
27 April, 2023
(Pages 1-83)

Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	<i>Premier, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Finance & Economic Development</i>
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Premier, Minister of Education and District Administration & Lands</i>
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Minister of Tourism & Ports
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Financial Services & Commerce and Investment, Innovation & Social Development
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs
Hon. Johany S. "Jay" Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	Minister of Border Control & Labour

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

ELECTED MEMBERS
GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Ms. Heather D. Boddan, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to Tourism and Social Development, Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker, Parliamentary Secretary to Home Affairs and Planning, Agriculture & Infrastructure, Elected Member for East End</i>
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBER

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Boddan Town West
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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
THIRD MEETING OF THE 2022/2023 SESSION
THURSDAY
27 APRIL, 2023
10:58 AM
Second Sitting

[Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. I call on the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman to grace us with prayers.

PRAYERS

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

Let us pray.

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

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

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

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

Amen.

The Speaker: Please be seated. Proceedings are resumed.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Madam Speaker, I want to rise on a matter

of procedure and it has to do with the Order Paper and the placing of business therein, in this instance, Private Members' Motions.

Madam Speaker, while Standing Orders don't say anything about the sequence of the business, two things are evident in our Standing Orders. It is Private Members' day. It is not Opposition Members' day, it is Private Members' Business day.

Precedent has been that the motions placed before the Clerks unnumbered is how they should be taken, unless some real overriding circumstance exists, like the Government needs more time to have a more considered position or that the mover is not ready for the motion, but the numbering is not there for the sake of a number. Members go to work, put their work together, get a seconder and place it as quickly as possible before the Clerks and therefore, we normally would have taken that business first unless, as I said, there is some overriding circumstance.

In this instance, I don't know why [Private Member's] Motion No. 11 is coming before [Private Member's] Motion No. 8. While it is important to both of us moving the motions, the motions, both of which I support, are very important, no two ways about it, but Madam Speaker, what I am concerned about is timing in this House. I placed a Motion some time ago to do with the Gaming Law (*sic*) [Gambling (Amendment) Bill] and I know that it probably would not have passed. I don't know where that motion is now. It is somewhere about in outer space, because they created a committee which has never met.

I have to be concerned, because I am not taking motions lightly. I have said, Madam Speaker that I am exiting politics—these are my last two years—but I want to see things done right because we have to be much more careful than ever before.

The other issue, Madam Speaker, on a matter of procedure, is that today is Private Members' Day and the Standing Orders is very clear. It is very clear, "**On all days other than Thursdays, Government Business shall have precedence over private Members business. On Thursdays, private Members' notices of motions shall have precedence on the Order Paper followed by private Members' Bills, followed by Government Business.**" As I said, every government has to organise themselves, but when you got so many reports...

In this instance, we have 16 or 17 reports and then Members tend to speak to their reports, whereas before you laid the report—very rarely would Members

speaking longer than a few minutes on a report; but that doesn't seem to be the norm today and if we are going to continue that way, and I wouldn't want to stop any Minister from speaking to a report they are laying, no, but it should come after Private Members' business.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member for West Bay West. If you just turn your mic off for me, please.

I acknowledge the Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay: Thank you, Madam Speaker and good morning.

Madam Speaker, the Member for West Bay West is absolutely right. This is a breach of the Standing Order that he referred to in the case of government business being placed on the Order Paper ahead of Private Members' business and I understand the Member's concern, because the day will be taken up with the laying of reports and papers followed by questions, and eight Private Members' Motions will not get heard.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to let the Member for West Bay West go ahead of me with my Private Members' Motions on the condition that I am permitted to move a motion, which the Member for West Bay West will hopefully second, that this breach of Standing Orders that I referred to be... what is the word I am looking for?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Corrected, by the removal of government business from the Order Paper, putting it over until tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, I would need your permission to move such a motion, and I so request of you.

The Speaker: Thank you Member for Red Bay.

The Member for West Bay West put me on notice last night that he intended to raise the matter in this honourable House as he did, so I did a little bit of research.

In terms of the Standing Orders, I agree. Standing Order 14(3) does not expressly state that the Motions are to be arranged in the sequence received; however, the Standing Business Committee's resolution sets out that it's resolved that they are to consider the business papers of the House. I was actually going to ask, I know the Member referred to precedents, but I was going to ask if a Member wanted to move a motion to amend the order of the Order Paper.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I think we should defer to the Premier and ask him to consider what we are saying, rather than go through a motion. The Premier can easily do that.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, if I am understanding the Member for Red Bay correctly, he seems to be arguing that Standing Order 14, which sets out the order of business of a sitting does not...

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, my issue at this point is the suggestion...

The work of the Standing Business Committee, which has been established by resolution of this House and given the remit by resolution of this House to determine the business for each sitting— and having done so in the way that I have seen happen many, many times even on Thursdays, which is normally Opposition or Private Members' Business Day— has never, to my knowledge, precluded the laying of reports by the Government following the normal listing of the order of business under Standing Order 14(1), so I don't agree.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, there is reference being made to Standing Order 14(3) as well, which I have not referred to specifically but I have referred to in substance, in terms of it provides that on Thursdays, Private Members' notices of motions shall have precedence on the Order Paper, followed by Private Members' Bills followed by Government Business.

Madam Speaker, if you look at Standing Order 14(1)(i), Government Business is typically referred to as:

- (i) Bills; and
- (ii) motions

Therefore, there is nothing in this, Madam Speaker, which suggests that the placing of reports on the Table of the House is in conflict with Standing Order 14 (3).

Standing Order 14(1) is quite clear, Madam Speaker. It sets out the typical order of business. It starts with:

- (a) Prayers;
- (b) Administration of oaths or affirmations;
- (c) Reading by the Presiding Officer of messages and announcements;
- (d) Presentation of petitions;
- (e) Presentation of papers and of reports of select and standing committees by laying them on the Table;
- (f) Questions to Members;
- (g) Statements by Members of the Government;
- (h) Personal explanations;
- (i) Obituary and other ceremonial speeches;
- (j) Raising of matters of privilege;

- (k) Other business —
 - i. motions;
 - ii. Bills;
- (l) Government business —
 - i. Bills;
 - ii. motions

Madam Speaker, there is nothing in that which suggests that the laying of annual reports on the Table of this honourable House is typically considered Government business no more than the typical start to our meetings as we do, having a prayer. Madam Speaker, it is normal to lay reports even on Private Members' day on Thursdays. I'm afraid that all of the effort that we are going through here is just going to delay things even further.

To me, it is simply not worth it. We should just move on. It is not going to impact the ability to get to those motions. I'm not going to guarantee we will get to every motion because I don't have control over all of that, but I would say that we are going to have the majority of them, if not all of them; and I am prepared to work late to ensure that each motion gets heard, and each Member who has brought the motion with a seconder has the opportunity to have their motions dealt with, Madam Speaker.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, let me reiterate, I'm not about stopping government from laying their reports, but I don't agree with the Premier on his setting out of the arrangement of business because it says nothing here. It says '**Other Business**' and then it mentions what that '**Other Business**' is— Motions and Bills. Government Business, Bills, Motions.

It says nothing about reports and, specifically, no committee of this House, none! can override the Standing Orders unless it is specifically moved. Unless it is specifically moved, and what it says on [subsection] (2). He read [subsection] (1), but he needs to read:

“(2) On all days other than Thursdays, government business shall have precedence over private Members business”; and

“(3) On Thursdays, private Members' notices of motions”— which mean the notices have been placed and accepted— **“shall have precedence on the Order Paper followed by private Members' bills, followed by government business.”**

That is what this says and no committee can override that, and we have not given any committee permission to override it; and all I am asking is— I don't want for the Members not to lay their reports, because they can do that tomorrow as well, they can do that later on as well, but today is set aside for Members to debate, and we have eight Members and Members take

time these days to explain their report and that is what has taken up the time.

Right now, we should be well on the way to business but I had to raise this, because of what has happened before. I had a motion, I never heard any more about it. It went to a committee, I can hear nothing about it; and I don't want these important motions, because I will tell you, all of them that I have seen Tabled are very important matters. Some have to do with constituency and some to do with the wider country.

We need to understand that we should be dealing with them first, after the normal matters are dealt with. The normal matters being the **Administration of Oaths or Affirmations, the Reading by the Honourable Speaker of Messages and Announcements, Presentation of Petitions**, and then we should do the **Questions**, because that is Private Members' business.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, may I trouble you—

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Sorry, Madam Speaker, all I am saying— Sorry, my apologies to the senior Member on the Opposition side.

I am saying that the Premier show goodwill, because there is no overriding circumstances against the motion, other than Members who will vote for or against. If he moves the motion then that's it. I can agree that we have been doing it for too long, but I have been here for nearly 40 years and I know that those days were sacrosanct to Private Members who did not have any other way but to speak on matters on days like that.

They were sacrosanct, and even if a report was laid, it was laid and nobody said anything. Members today want to explain and perhaps they do need to explain, and in some depth, so I wouldn't go against it, but not today; not first.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, I will trouble you one last time regardless of how this goes.

I go back to first principles: the House has not met in five months. Unless you go on the radio there has been no opportunity for Members who are not part of the government to express their concerns about the governing of this country.

The Standing Orders allow the government four days for their business to take precedence. One day is Thursday. The House started an hour late today, and we have 17 reports. That's going to take another hour and a half

Madam Speaker, aside from the fact that doing it as the business committee has done is clearly, in my view, in breach of Standing Order 14(2) which says, **“on all days, other than Thursdays, government business shall have precedence over private Members business”**. It is just inequitable for the Government to

take up the best part of half of the legislative day doing its business.

Unless the Premier is suggesting that these reports are not government business; because if they are not government business, they should not be in the paper because they certainly are not private Members' business.

I don't know whose business it is if it is not government business, so Madam Speaker, I ask the Premier to be reasonable and let the private Members' business proceed and his government can do their reports tomorrow. They can come Saturday if they want, I will be here.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, my issue with the approach taken by the Member for Red Bay is the suggestion that this is somehow untypical; that this is not in accordance with the Standing Orders. It is not in breach of the Standing Orders, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, this Order Paper represents the same approach that has been taken by the last two administrations. It is very typical and common; it does not reflect any attempt at not acting in good faith or anything to that extent. The Business Committee considered that the motions that the official Opposition were bringing were going to be motions that could be dispensed with sooner. That is the rationale behind having them dealt with in that manner.

Madam Speaker, we have just wasted much more time back and forth in this when we could have been dealing with things and moving on. Madam Speaker, to make it absolutely clear that this Government is not acting in bad faith in any way, and it is certainly not desirous of being perceived as being unreasonable. I will move a Motion for the suspension of Standing Order 14(1) under Standing Orders 86, and move a motion to reorder the business so that Private Member's Motion No. 8, which is listed as item 3; Private Member's Motion No. 9, which is listed as "iv", and Private Member's Motion No. 10, which is listed as "v", be placed at the top of the list of motions, Madam Speaker, in accordance with the Order Paper set out for today.

The Speaker: Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, the Premier has just added insult to injury.

The Member for West Bay West is part of his Government so what he has done now, to compound the breach of Private Members' business taking precedence over Government Business—because he is still

proceeding with the laying of his reports—he now promotes the Member for West Bay West's motions, I don't know whose is the third one; three motions above her Majesty's loyal Opposition's motions, so it is pure government business, not just the Cabinet business but the backbench business as well, ahead of the Opposition.

[Cross talk]

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, this—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: This, Madam Speaker, I truly think is some form of mischief. This issue, to my mind, is about the question of where the motions fall, Madam Speaker.

I have already articulated, and I have read through Standing Order 14(1), and I referred to Standing Order 14 (2) and (3) which say on all other days other than Thursdays, government business shall take precedence; but, Madam Speaker, under Standing Order 14(1), [items] (a) through (k) are not discussed as government business. Government business is described under Standing Order 14(1) (l) beginning with Bills, and then followed by motions, Madam Speaker. The order of precedents for dealing with the business of this honourable House is set out in all of the items for the agenda for the business of this House above (l), so 14(1) (a) through (k).

Madam Speaker, the Tabling of statements would fall within that area of the order of business and it has been done that way in the administration that I was a part of, and every other administration that I have seen operate on a Thursday. If the government has annual reports to lay, they can be laid on the Table and typically they aren't even spoken to at all, but typically, if they are, it's very brief.

Madam Speaker, we are going to stand up here and argue about this and waste so much time now. My issue is, simply, that I do not accept that this represents a breach, because to suggest that it is a breach, is to impugn the motives of the Standing Business Committee which has, by resolution of this honourable House the remit, Madam Speaker, to determine the business of this House on every day that the House sits, in accordance with the Standing Orders.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yes; and I have just articulated, Madam Speaker, why the suggestion

that laying reports ahead of the Private Members' Motions being dealt with is not a breach, is not unreasonable, is not unfair but, particularly, it is not a breach. I do not accept that it represents some kind of breach.

Now, if the Member wants to, by virtue of being a Member of the Standing Orders Review Committee, argue that issue, to be reflected properly in any new Standing Orders he may do that, but on the basis of these Standing Orders, his accusations and allegations are unfounded, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, you did rise a few minutes ago to move a motion.

Before we get back to that point, I need to take a quick five-minute break. I seem to have picked up the wrong notes here, so I am just going to take five minutes. That will give you all time to determine what you are doing, and I will come back to see if we are going to move forward with a motion to amend.

Proceedings suspended at 11.28a.m.

Proceedings resumed at 11.41a.m.

The Speaker: Please be seated. Proceedings are resumed.

Thank you for your patience. When I left I believe we had a Motion on the Floor by the Honourable Premier. Let me see if I can find my notes. Motion to rearrange Private Member's Motions 8, 9 and 10 so that 8, 9 and 10 come before Private Members' Motions 11 and 12.

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

AYES and two audible NOES.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, may we have a division please; and the Minister of Tourism was not in his seat when the vote was taken.

Division No. 9 of 2022-2023

AYES: 7

Hon. G. Wayne Panton
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Conolly
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks
Hon. André M. Ebanks
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush

NOES: 6

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart
Mr. Joseph Hew
Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly
Mr. David C. Wight

NOT IN SEAT

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan
Hon. Bernie A. Bush
Ms. Heather D. Bodden

ABSENT

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: You know the pastor christens his own pickney first.

The Speaker: I have seven Ayes, six Noes, and five absentees. The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Members' Motions 8, 9 and 10 rearranged to come before Private Members' Motions 11 and 12.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, this still does not address the matter raised by the Member for Red Bay. Does the Member for Red Bay wish to continue with what you were raising in relation to a motion?

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it requires me to move a motion with respect to the laying of reports, so with your permission, Madam Speaker, I move that [item] number five on the Order Paper— Presentation of Papers and of Reports be moved to the end of the Order Paper following the last Private Member's Motion.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town East: Madam Speaker, I second the Motion.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Isn't that what we just did?

The Speaker: No.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: That is what he did. Thank you.

The Speaker: The question is that the Order Paper is rearranged to have the Private Members' Motions addressed before the reports. All those in favour, please say Aye, those against, No.

AYES and NOES

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: May we have a division Ma'am?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Conolly, Deputy Premier, Minister of Education and District Administration & Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Madam Clerk, on a minutia procedural matter. A division can only be called after you said the results even though the practical effect is the same.

The Speaker: I believe the Noes have it.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May we have a division, please?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Division No. 10 of 2022-2023

NOES: 9

Hon. G. Wayne Panton
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks
Hon. André M. Ebanks
Hon. Bernie A. Bush
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine
Ms. Heather D. Bodden

AYES: 7

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart
Mr. Joseph Hew
Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell
Ms. Barbara E. Connolly
Mr. David C. Wight
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush*

ABSENT

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

**Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I don't know what we are doing.*

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Honourable Member.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, can you take one minute to say... The reports will still come on the Order Paper— am I right?

The Speaker: Correct; just after.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Aye.

The Speaker: The results of the division. I have seven Ayes, nine Noes and two Absentees. The Noes have it.

Motion to move item number five on the Order Paper— Presentation of Papers and of Reports be moved to the end of the Order Paper following the last Private Member's Motion failed.

[Pause]

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

The Speaker: None.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

SISTER ISLANDS AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION – ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of District Administration and Lands.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Madam Speaker, good morning.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the report in respect to the Sister Islands Affordable Housing Development Corporation for the year ended 31st December, 2021.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Deputy Premier: No, thank you, Madam Speaker.

GOVERNMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS – CAYMAN NATIONAL CULTURAL FOUNDATION – ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2016

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, Elected Member for West Bay North: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House their Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June 2016, for the Cayman National Cultural Foundation.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: No, thank you, Madam Speaker.

GOVERNMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS – CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES (CAYS) FOUNDATION –

**ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
31 DECEMBER 2021**

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Investment, innovation and Social Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Investment, Innovation and Social Development: Good morning and thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Report ended 31st December, 2021 for the Children and Youth Services Foundation.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, thank you, Madam Speaker.

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN –
REPORT ON ELECTION REGISTRATION AND
PROCESSING OF VOTER DATA (APRIL 2022)**

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Office of the Ombudsman Report on the Election Registration and Processing of Voter Data dated April, 2022.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Just to remind Members to wait until I acknowledge you before you speak. Do you wish to speak to the report?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you for the hard work to the present Ombudsman and her staff. They are trying to get things in shape, and this is another good piece of work.

Thank you.

**2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
STANDING SELECT COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE
THE PERFORMANCE OF
THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN**

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Youth Sports, Culture and Heritage.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the 2021 2022 Annual Report of the Standing Select Committee to oversee the performance of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Just to say once again that the Ombudsman and her staff are working really hard to get this most important section of our system into top-

shape so that it can represent Caymanians where they have to be represented.

Thank you very much.

**OFREG 2019 ANNUAL REPORT
OFREG 2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. “Jay” Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House OfReg’s Annual Reports for 2019 and 2020.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Johany S. “Jay” Ebanks: No, ma’am; both reports are self-explanatory.

**MINISTRY OF BORDER CONTROL & LABOUR –
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT –
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Border Control and Labour.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Minister of Border Control and Labour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the annual report of the Ministry of Border Control and Labour for the financial period ending 31st December, 2021.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, just to say that on April 20th, 2022, the Auditor General issued an unqualified or “clean” opinion.

Thank you.

**PARLIAMENT MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

The Speaker: The Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I rise to seek your permission to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Report for the Parliament Management Commission for 2021.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, do you wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Thank you for your permission to lay the report, Madam Speaker. I think it is self-explanatory, and I commend it to Members and the public.

Thank you

**CIAA –
CAYMAN ISLANDS AIRPORTS AUTHORITY
2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism & Ports, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to lay on the Floor of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Airports Authority 2018 Annual Report.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: No, Madam Speaker, but to thank the CEO, the staff at the Airport's Authority and the former Chairman, for the completion of the report.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
CAYMAN ISLANDS
THE GOVERNMENT'S SHIFT TO
ONLINE SERVICES (JUNE 2022)**

**REPORT OF THE STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS
COMMITTEE ON THE REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF
THE AUDITOR GENERAL: GOVERNMENT'S SHIFT
TO ONLINE SERVICES (JUNE 2022)**

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the report of the Office of the Auditor General entitled The Government's Shift to Online Services, together with the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the report of the Office of the Auditor General: Government's Shift to Online Services, (June 2022).

The Speaker: Do you wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: No, thank you Madam Speaker, except to mention that we held hearings on the report in October of 2022, and all of the information regarding recommendations is contained in the reports.

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL CAYMAN ISLANDS – FOLLOW-UP ON PAST PAC RECOMMENDATIONS 2022 – REPORT 3 (SEPTEMBER 2022)

REPORT OF THE STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE ON THE REPORT OF THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL: FOLLOW-UP ON PAST PAC RECOMMENDATIONS 2022 – REPORT 3 (SEPTEMBER 2022)

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House a report from the Office of the Auditor General entitled Follow-up on Past PAC Recommendations 2022, Report 3, together with the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the report of the Office of the Auditor General: Follow-up on Past PAC Recommendations 2022, Report No. 3 of September, 2022.

The Speaker: Does the Member wish to speak?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker; again just to mention that hearings were held in November of last year with regard to the report. The details are all contained in the report itself and the report of the Public Accounts Committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker

**2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the on the Table of this honourable House the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee.

The Speaker: Thank you. Do you wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, just to mention, specifically, that the report documents all of the activities of the Standing Public Accounts Committee for the 2021-2022 year; I commend the report to the Members and to the public.

**OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL
CAYMAN ISLANDS –
OVERVIEW OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS'
PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE SUSTAINABLE**

DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOCUSED ON THE ENVIRONMENT (MARCH 2023)

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House a report from the Office of the Auditor General entitled: Overview of the Cayman Islands' Performance against the Sustainable Development Goals Focused on the Environment.

The Speaker: Does the Member wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Just briefly to say, Madam Speaker that the report is of a factual nature only. The Committee did not hold public hearings on it and there are no recommendations in it. It was a fact-finding gathering and reporting for the benefit of the Parliament and the public, but I do commend the report. It makes for an interesting read.

Thank you.

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF CABINET

The Speaker: We have gone beyond the hour of 11 a.m. so I would like to call for a motion to suspend Standing Order 23(7) and (8).

Suspension of Standing Order 23(7) and (8)

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

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 86, I move the suspension of Standing Order 23 (7) and (8) in order to allow the putting or answering questions after the hour of 11a.m.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Orders 23 (7) and (8) be suspended to allow questions to be asked after the hour of 11a.m.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

AGREED: Standing Order 23 (7) and (8) suspended.

The Speaker: Members, I know we are at that point in the Order Paper where we are going to go into questions, however, lunch has arrived. I think it is probably a good time for us to break for lunch while it's hot.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: No? Okay. Members are more inclined to continue now with the questions, so if there is a Member in the Chamber who is hungry, you can excuse yourself while the questions are being conducted.

QUESTION NO. 15 CONTROVERSY AT THE 2023 CARIFTA GAMES INVOLVING THE CAYMAN ISLANDS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town West.

Mr. David C. Wight, Elected Member for George Town West: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister advise the House on the facts regarding the controversy at the 2023 Caribbean Free Trade Association CARIFTA Games involving the Cayman Islands Athletic Association, and the Caymanian CARIFTA shot-put gold medallist?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister responsible for Youth, Sports, Culture, and Heritage.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture, & Heritage's primary focus when it comes to the National Sporting Associations (NSAs) of our identified Focus Sports is Grant Funding.

The Ministry does not interfere, restrict, or choose the makeup of the NSA boards and their Operational Administration meetings [matters]; however, it does hold progress meetings with each NSA to offer guidance if needed.

With the recent establishment of the National Sports Commission, the Commission will:

1. Provide leadership in the formulation of the national policies and the setting of priorities and direction of all youth & sports programmes and activities in the Cayman Islands;
2. Governance and work to improve standards and accountability of youth and sports activities and organisations; and
3. Be the responsible body for monitoring the implementation of the National Youth & Sports Policy.

Madam Speaker, as it relates directly to the question asked by the Elected Member for George Town West, it is the understanding of the Ministry that a complete response was already presented to the Leader of the Opposition from the Cayman Islands Athletic Association. This response, having been provided directly from the Association in question, therefore supersedes the response from the Ministry.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions?

Mr. David C. Wight Just to thank the Minister for his reply. Thank you.

**QUESTION NO. 16
IMPROVEMENTS BEEN MADE TO THE
MANAGEMENT OF THE GEORGE TOWN
LANDFILL**

The Speaker: The honourable Member for George Town North.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask a question in my name to the Honourable Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs.

Can the Honourable Minister advise whether any improvements have been made to the management of the George Town landfill, including compacting and covering the waste material; and whether the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) is continuing to regularly douse the landfill with water in an effort to prevent fires?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Health & Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, Minister of Health and Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Prospect: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Department of Environmental Health DEH, (the Department), engages in constant improvement as it relates to landfill management. In general terms, Madam Speaker, site management involves weighing, sorting and recording data on all materials received at the tipping area. Waste that is landfilled is placed on the mound, and compacted with available equipment.

Madam Speaker, due to constant use of the fleet and equipment, the DEH admittedly deals with machine shortage and breakdowns which affects but does not halt service delivery. The three primary pieces of equipment needed for compacting and coverage are an excavator, a compactor and bulldozer. During episodes of equipment failure, the DEH partners with private subcontractors for equipment rentals however, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to advise that:

- A new excavator arrived in October of 2022 and it is in operation;
- A new compactor was delivered on the 13th April and it is expected to be an operation within the next four weeks; and
- A new bulldozer is expected to be delivered in June of this year.

Once all are functioning fully, compaction rates and coverage usage will increase thereby enhancing the DEH's landfill operations.

Madam Speaker, the site is being filled in accordance with a tipping plan. The material used to cover is marl, and it is applied when it is available from local suppliers; the DEH aims to do this monthly but are challenged given that they are competing with contractors and may have to wait on an order, based on demand for the actual product.

As it relates to dousing the site, Madam Speaker, it is not feasible to continually apply water to the landfill with the intention of reducing a fire risk and as such, the DEH does not carry out this function. As we can appreciate, the site is prone to frequent flares even on a small scale, and on those occasions, Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands Fire Service is called upon to intervene.

Fire officers will use water to control and identify outbreaks however, these operations stop once the fire has been extinguished and the all-clear has been given by the fire officers on the scene.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town North, you have a supplementary question?

Supplementaries

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I do have a couple.

I thank the Minister for this answer and I wonder, Madam Speaker, if the Minister could advise as to why it is going to take almost seven weeks for a compactor to become operational. Is it a budget constraint? Is it a labour constraint?

What are the reasons that a compactor, which is a key piece of equipment to the maintenance of the landfill and which has been absent for quite some time now— why has it taken seven weeks to get this piece of equipment moving? I hope that the Honourable Minister can shed some light on that.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness and Home Affairs.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I was reliably informed that the compactor had shipment scheduling delays based on its sheer size, plus it doesn't come as a whole piece of equipment; it comes in parts and then experts from the line it was ordered from come to assemble it on Island. That is the reason for the delays. It doesn't come assembled.

The Speaker: Are there any other supplementary questions?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to confirm with the Honourable Minister the timeframe between the 13th April, which was delivery on Island, to becoming operational within the next four weeks, is to assemble the equipment?

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: [That is] what I have been reliably informed. Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I guess I should have added this. In fact, I will make it a much broader question, Madam Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister confirm that the budget is in place for the operators of this equipment, as well as for the purchasing of the marl that's needed to layer, and therefore compact, the equipment? I just want confirmation from the Minister that the necessary budgets are there for the staff to carry out the maintenance of the landfill.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Madam Speaker, with what information has been shared with me from my Ministry, I am confident that at this appointed time, with this specific budget, up until 2023, that we are okay when it comes to funding.

That is one of the main things where securing sufficient funding for the right equipment. [It] was secured from this Government being elected into office. We are in the process right now of preparing the budget taking us into the next two years—pretty much three years. I will make sure that my colleagues understand the importance of this, but with the information has been shared with me at this time, I'm comfortable in saying that we should be financially okay.

The Speaker: Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank the Honourable Member for that response; it provides some comfort.

Madam Speaker, can I also ask the Honourable Member, out of concern. Recently, within the district of George Town North, in particular around the Parkway/Kintyre areas there have been a quite a bit of social media activity showing some videos with a white sludge coming from the culverts that come across the road from the landfill side over to the West Bay Road side.

Can the Minister let me know if there has been any testing of that water done to ensure that there's potentially no harm not only to the environment, but the residents in the area.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Testing has been done and it does not pose a risk. Again, I have been reliably informed that the National Roads Authority (NRA) installed all drainage systems from Parkway Drive running under the Esterly Tibbetts Highway, which flows into the North Sound. Given its proximity to the landfill, as the pipe's run alongside the site, it is perceived that DEH is responsible for that; or that the water being referred to is coming directly from the landfill, but that is not the case.

This system is not a concern for DEH, and any issue should be redirected to the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture and Housing, which deals with the NRA.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker and thank the Minister for that answer.

I guess I will have to wait until we are back in the House again to redirect those questions to DOE and NRA, but what I can tell the Minister is that, in particular with the recent tides, the water is actually flowing into the dyke roads.

If you were to travel into Washington Boulevard right now, the area commonly known as The Swamp, you will see that the water is actually on the main road coming from the North Sound and you can see the flow coming back toward the West Bay Road. The same thing is happening along the Esterley Tibbetts Highway and with that flow, you can see—the videos show it clearly—where the water is flowing from the dyke adjacent to the landfill under the Esterley Tibbetts, into the series of dyke roads that run along the Esterley Tibbetts Highway to the West on the West side of the highway and persons are genuinely concerned.

I guess I will have to wait until we are back in again, or perhaps I could ask that the Minister responsible for the Department of Environment, perhaps, could have a look, and provide information to the public—or if not to the general public, even send it to myself and then I can provide that information to the residents and let them feel assured that there is no nothing to be concerned about. It is a very genuine request.

Madam Speaker, while I am on my feet, if I could just close with a quick comment on this line of questioning. I thank the Minister for her candidness and her responses. I support the Minister and the DEH in that hopefully we can get this equipment up and running in shorter than four weeks. I also would encourage the Minister to speak to her team; I think even the Honourable Premier, in one of his responses to my many previous questions on this topic, cited that the industry standard is 24 to 48 hours for compacting and layering. I think once a month, especially if we are trying to stretch this landfill over the next six years, when we

hopefully have the waste management— what's the timeline for ISWMS?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: 26? Two years, three years. We still have to make the current tipping area work for the next three years and the more we compact, the more we layer, the less chance of fires and the longer the landfill will last, so I am just imploring the Minister and the Government.

If there is a way through funding, through sourcing materials, that we can do it more than once a month; at a minimum, ensure that it is done once a month. The people of George Town North would really appreciate it.

The Speaker: I recognise the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

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

Madam Speaker, is the Minister in a position to give an update on equipment and plans for the landfill in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness and Home Affairs.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I have been reliably informed that there is equipment expected to go to the Brac. A second excavator is planned for over there, and personally visiting that site more than once, I do agree that as a Ministry, we will be focusing our attention more in collaboration— of course, under the guidance of the director of DEH— to improve how waste is actually handled at that site. You will notice that the other day we sent over a new garbage truck, and you will continue to see, as equipment arrives on Island.

I'm very grateful to my colleagues for supporting my ask as we resumed our positions, understanding the importance of getting the right equipment in a timely manner in order to do this very job; but the Sister Islands have not been forgotten, and you will see where we will definitely show an improvement in the equipment that will be sent over there, it's not just in Grand Cayman. Equipment is en route, it will be brought over to our sister Islands in short order.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I would like to thank the Minister for her answer and for her interest in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town North.

**QUESTION NO. 17 (a)
UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS WITH THE
GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED UNDERSEA
TELECOMS CABLE**

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise once again to ask the question in my name to the Minister of Planning Agriculture Housing and Infrastructure and the question reads, Madam Speaker: Can the Honourable Minister update the House on the progress with the Government's proposed undersea telecom cable, as well as an update on any other subsea telecom cables proposed by private sector entities.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for planning, agriculture housing and infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, please allow me to provide an update to the Elected Member for George Town North's question regarding the Cayman Islands Government International subsea telecommunications system initiative.

As an essential and critical infrastructure, the Government has prioritised this initiative recognising that the existing systems are rapidly aging:

- The Maya-1 that has served the Cayman Islands providing international communications going into its 23rd year, is approaching its end of life and the expectation is that it will be closed at 25 years;
- The other system, the Cayman-Jamaica Fibre system, is 26 years and also vulnerable.

Madam Speaker, considering this infrastructure is responsible for 99 per cent of international communications to and from these Islands we take this matter seriously. With this understanding of a potential dilemma at hand, my team has acted accordingly and delivered an Outline Business Case report that explored and developed options for replacing the system. The report has confirmed the existing systems are at risk and the government must act swiftly if the local telecom sectors will not.

Cabinet has now reviewed the options put forward in the business case and authorised the Ministry of PAHI to go out to market to confirm what interests exist for building the cable systems independently or identify a worthwhile partner/investor to the Cayman Islands government.

Madam Speaker, following this step (understanding market or investors' interest), is the development of a full business case to obtain the final specifications, actual costs to build the system, and provide a detailed solution for Cabinet to review for its approval.

I am glad to say that this shall be going out hopefully this week, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, you have a second part. Yes.

**QUESTION NO. 17 (b)
UPDATE ON ANY OTHER SUBSEA
TELECOMS CABLE PROPOSED BY
PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, please continue.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, to my knowledge several private sector entities, both local and overseas, have approached the Government as there is no capacity to build submarine cable systems on Islands. These entities are proposing to build the submarine cable system that are passing by the Cayman Islands from the USA onwards to Central and South America. The Outline Business Case report has evaluated some of these proposals and made recommendations accordingly.

Additionally, Madam Speaker, I have heard of local entities representing some of the larger international systems proposing to land a branch system that provides bandwidth to the Cayman Islands; however, I have no detailed information on any other subsea telecoms cable proposed by private sector.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions? Elected Member for George Town North.

Supplementaries

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Minister for the detailed answer and confirm that to date, where we are at now, is that the government is moving towards a full business case on the modern subsea cable. If so, what are the timelines for that business case to be completed?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister Planning Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, as far as I know right to the minute, ma'am, everything was completed and the Request for Proposal (RFP) was to go out this week; that is what I was told on Tuesday. I don't mind providing more information to the honourable Member for George Town North.

The Speaker: Are there any other supplementary questions?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the honourable Minister for the response.

Madam Speaker, I just want to confirm with the Honourable Minister. I know that in the 2022-2023 budget there was \$15 million funding for this subsea telecoms cable. I just want to confirm that such funding is still in place, and that the Minister feels confident that he has the funding to continue with the outline business case and progress towards what we are all looking forward to, which is a modern subsidy cable.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, and Housing.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, we know the funding that we have right to current isn't significant enough to complete the submarine cable. I am pretty sure that the government is in full support of making sure that we have the funding in the budget coming up, that we can continue on.

It would be a shame for us not to continue with it after we have gotten this far, and seeing how it is of national importance not only to the country but to the financial sector and everybody else here.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to thank the Honourable Minister for his responses and I look forward to seeing progress on this very important project.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Red Bay.

**QUESTION NO. 18
UPDATE ON THE EDDIE SANCHEZ MEMORIAL
PARK IN RED BAY/PROSPECT**

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Elected Member for Red Bay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am to ask the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure question number 18 on the Order Paper standing in my name which reads as follows:

Can the Honourable Minister provide an update on the progress of the Eddie Sanchez Memorial Park in Red Bay and Prospect?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, the Eddy Sanchez Park, which is envisioned as an integral gathering and recreational space for the neighbourhoods of Red Bay and Prospect, has seen substantial improvement over the past year.

In addition to the cabanas and walking track at the park, a sidewalk along Prospect Drive has been built, allowing for safer travel by pedestrians. The parking lot has been asphalted and parking spaces defined. The park has also benefited by the installation of partial landscaping, including the planting of three mature trees and the spreading of 300 cubic yards of top soil.

Scheduled for the second quarter of 2023 is the spreading of an additional 300 cubic yards of topsoil in preparation of seeding and turfing of the playfield, fencing along Prospect Drive to fully enclose the parking area, chip and spray along the Prospect Drive side of the park, and the drilling of two deep wells.

The Speaker: Does the Elected Member have any supplementary questions?

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

No, not really. Just to thank the Minister for moving this along, and to say how we welcome it will be when the fence along the Prospect Drive side of the park is completed to discourage the parking of vehicles, particularly, those that are abandoned or derelict, which continues to be a problem in that area.

Thanks again to the Minister.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town West.

QUESTION NO. 19 DELOITTE REPORT WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David C. Wight: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to ask the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure question number 19 standing in my name.

Can the Honourable Minister state when the Deloitte report, with recommendations on public transportation, will be made public, along with the terms of reference that formed the basis of the report?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, as the honourable House is aware, the subject of public transport has just been recently transferred to the Ministry. We are currently reviewing the subject matter and will provide a further update to this honourable House in due course.

Madam Speaker, just a heads up: My team just set a timeframe for next week for us to actually sit down to dissect the whole report to see how we will be moving forward, so I will be making a statement on the report in the following weeks.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions? Elected Member for George Town West.

Supplementaries

Mr. David C. Wight: I appreciate that the Minister has only recently been handed responsibility for public transport; but can he explain why it took this Government 18 months to commence this consultancy study, when we know that the Ministry was preparing the necessary documentation during the last administration?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I am wondering whether the question is worth me getting up; as he was aware, it just got transferred to me.

If he would like to pose the question to the Minister that had it before, I would pass it on to him, sir.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to assist my colleague, as I was the Minister responsible up until recently.

The Speaker: Please speak into your Mic.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

I just rise to try to assist this honourable House and the Member who asked the question in relation to the timing.

As you are aware, it was once under— Madam Speaker I am not sure if the mic has a problem, but I am speaking reasonably loud.

The Speaker: I think it is because you are a little taller; you are further away from the mic.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, the answer to the question of the timeline is quite simple. We issued the report almost a year ago and it is very technical. It has many elements in respect of renewables and electric buses, and many reports had to be collected from the various agencies.

As the Opposition has acknowledged in other iterations in this House, it is a very complex problem in trying to offer the government a complete solution. Also, unfortunately, the key person in the report recently had a passing in their family which delayed the completion of the report for our assessment through government until the transfer to the Honourable Minister Ebanks' Ministry.

I tried to give as many updates to the Members as to how far we were going, but I must say though, that the Member's viewpoint that the former government had stuff in the works before we took office is not

factual, Madam Speaker, because there was not a formal report issued. There was one done internally as to what to do about derelict vehicles and so forth, by the former elected Member for Prospect, but it was not done with any—in my humble opinion—specialist's advice and determination of a complete public transport system. Also, within that report were discussions about the necessary regulatory changes to the law in order to have a complete public transport system.

Now, Madam Speaker, I will continue to help with transferring to my colleague what I learned over the last two years dealing with the matter—or I should say the last year and a half, because we were focusing on COVID for the first six months. I know that his Chief Officer and his team are already in full-depth dive of the report and will, like the Minister has said, provide this honourable House with full details as soon as they are available.

Hopefully, that will assist this honourable House, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town West. Are there any other supplementary questions?

Mr. David C. Wight: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I appreciate that the responsibility for public transport has just been transferred to the Honourable Minister's Ministry, but they are a unified government so I think they should all know what is going on.

I would like to ask, will the Minister confirm that funding to implement whatever solution emerges from the consultancy report be provided in the 2023-24 budget?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I would just tell the honourable Member to stay tuned.

[Laughter]

QUESTION NO. 20 UPDATE ON WHEN THE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY WILL BE COMPLETED AND OPERATIONAL

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am to ask the Honourable Minister of Health and Wellness *and* Home Affairs question number 20 standing in my name, which reads as follows: Can the Honourable Minister update Parliament as to when the mental health facility will be completed and operational?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the physical building construction for the long-term residential mental health facility located in High Rock, East End has been completed. The site is comprised of three main buildings which are:

- The administration building;
- The cafeteria and kitchen building; and
- The workshop and activities building which will also serve as the hurricane shelter for residents.

All nine cottages' construction have been completed and all furniture and fittings have been installed.

The surrounding landscape is also completed including the road by NRA to and around the facility. Pavers are currently being installed by the contractor to allow easier access between the cottages and the main buildings, which will be completed upon completion of the levelling of the wraparound road by NRA.

I have been reliably informed that currently the focus of the contractors is to complete the final punch list and painting requirements in preparation for mandatory building inspections related to electrical, plumbing, and the final certificate of occupancy inspections—the facility is designed so that completed individual buildings may be staggered for occupancy and operation as completed and approved.

I have [also] been reliably informed last week that, pending no delays with the inspection process Madam Speaker, it is estimated that the site will be handed over to the Ministry by the end of June of this year.

The Ministry is resourcing staff for the operation and delivery of services, Madam Speaker, and it is the Ministry's intention that operations will commence six months after being awarded the building from the contractors.

The Ministry is also working on putting in place the policy and procedures required to accept residents both local and from overseas, Madam Speaker, based on the admission criteria.

I have also been reliably informed by my team that it is anticipated that the facility will be in full operation by early 2024.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions Honourable Member for Red Bay?

Supplementaries

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was trying to recall when construction on this project started, but I think it must be four years now. Granted, there was COVID and tools were down for a considerable amount of time, but that should have only served to give the Ministry and

the others concerned more lead time in which to decide on what human resources and expertise was needed to operate the mental health facility.

Why is it going to take six months from the turnover of the building— and the date of which is still uncertain— before the mental health facility can be made operational and provide the extremely needed care for that sector of our community? What has caused such an inordinate delay in getting in place the staffing and programming that is necessary for this facility? And may I ask—so that I don't have to ask another supplementary—could the Minister tell us what has been done thus far in that regard?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, one would appreciate that upon taking office [and] the responsibility for this project, the Ministry of Health and Wellness was pretty much totally submerged into the reopening and COVID regulations. As a new Administration, this project remains at the forefront, it did not take the back burner; but I must admit that, practically for a year and a half, my Ministry was totally invested in getting our country, our Island, reopened as safely as possible. At the time, with the limited staffing that was on hand, our primary focus was on COVID regulations.

Since then, we have maintained open dialogue and communication; as information on opening dates and so forth has become available to us, we inform and update the public of all these. We must understand that the ground breaking took place on the 8th October, 2019. After that, as you rightly stated, the country was in lockdown.

We underwent a number of delays, from what I have been reported, resulting from Hurricane Grace. Now we are dealing with supply chain shortages, and most recently one of the biggest delays, based on what I have been told, was with the electrical— the backup generator and getting that piece of equipment here. As I have reported to this honourable House, all of that has now been put behind us and we are just waiting for the final inspections to be concluded in order for the Certificate of Occupancy (CO) to actually be given to the Ministry.

As it pertains to recruitment, the Ministry is currently in the recruiting process for the director of the facility and other key senior management posts. I was advised that they were in the short-listing phase for the director, so [I will provide the Member with a more detailed response in writing](#), because employment falls under the direct remit of my Chief Officer and other senior management team.

I hope that satisfies the Member's queries at this time.

The Speaker: Are there any more supplementary questions?

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: None

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: none,

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: Members, I want take a few minutes to acknowledge the accomplishment of another Caymanian who just successfully completed their doctorate degree. I must admit that in this instance I have bragging rights, as the individual happens to be my sister-in-law, Ms. Sylvia Wilks.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: My family received news last night that she successfully completed her doctorate in strategic leadership with an emphasis in global consulting. I just wanted to acknowledge the accomplishments of another Caymanian who, I'm hoping, will be able to return and contribute to the Cayman Islands.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I would like to put on record the passing of another West Bay stalwart citizen and businessman; a forerunner in many areas of business in West Bay, notably his bakery, that is now the late Mr. Bergman Ebanks, who passed away yesterday.

Known to me as Buggy, he was a personal friend and, as I said, a forerunner in several business areas. He was certainly a good father and I certainly appreciated the work he did and the interest he took in the community. So I do want to make note of sincere condolences to his good wife, Ms. Treaty and their family.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member for West Bay West. I echo the sentiments you have just shared about the late Mr. Bergman Ebanks who was a dear friend and constituent of mine and I, too, offer condolences to his family.

RAISING OF MATTER OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

Members, I think this is a good time for us to take a suspension for the lunch hour. We will resume in one hour at 2p.m.

Proceedings suspended at 1.01p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 3.39 p.m.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Private Member's Motion No. 8/2022-2023 Improving the Traffic Flow Congestion in the Eastern Districts

The Speaker: I recognise the Elected Member for Red Bay.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, before we begin, I just wish to make an observation for the record; that it is now 25 minutes to four and we have not yet begun to proceed on any Private Members' Business—the point that I was striving to drive home earlier this morning.

[Pause]

The Speaker: I acknowledge the mention that the Elected Member for Red Bay has made.

I now call on the Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 8 standing in my name which reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Cabinet of the Cayman Islands in 2005 gazetted the East-West Arterial Road to be built immediately;

WHEREAS there is an increasing number of Caymanians who are passed frustrated with the lack of urgency shown in improving the traffic congestion;

AND WHEREAS the eastern districts residents are at a disadvantage in sleep quality and family quality because of the long commute to and from work;

AND WHEREAS eastern district residents are more prone to accidents and tiredness on the job and these constituents are struggling to maintain a decent lifestyle, desiring just one more hour of sleep;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Government considers building the East-West Arterial road with immediate effect from Hirst Road to Lookout Gardens as the less environmentally sensitive area and only continue with the EIA study from Lookout Gardens to North Side as the more sensitive area.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder to this Motion?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Madam Speaker, as the representative for Bodden Town West in the eastern districts, I wholeheartedly, 1000 per cent would be very happy to second this Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate.

Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank my colleague, the Member for Bodden Town West for his endorsement and seconding the Motion.

The Motion, Madam Speaker, is entitled Improving Traffic Flow Congestion in the Eastern Districts. Madam Speaker, we are all aware of the daily traffic congestion and delays experienced by residents in the eastern districts. It is an increasingly frustrating issue for people, business owners and operators, and for transportation providers.

Madam Speaker, I don't know how much we pay attention to our census but there are 14,845 people in Bodden Town, 1,902 North Side and 1,846 in East End, which brings us to a total of 18,593 people living in the eastern districts.

Now, to add to that, we have tourism that creates traffic in those areas and we want more and more tourism to go east. On top of that, we have other Caymanians who traverse those areas who own property, who have family but they live in other districts; they traverse those areas to look for their family, plus other events.

Madam Speaker, there is debate all over the place concerning this matter because as people living here, we feel for what those people on that side of Grand Cayman are experiencing. I don't live in the East, but this is not just about the eastern districts as I just tried to say, this is a national issue directly affecting the suffering people in Bodden Town, North Side and East End especially.

Madam Speaker, we have had discussions, we know about the environmental impact assessments—

we were just reminded—but I read—that's one thing I have always been good at—and I know that other island nations do these studies. However, above any environmental impact study is the impact on people. While some have labelled me anti-environment, I have a good enough record that I can defend myself when it comes to doing things in the best interest—and not to say that we can't do better, I believe we can. However, I don't believe that any assessment should stop what we can do knowing full well that it doesn't affect the people who need this redress.

I don't believe that there is a law, *I don't believe it*, which overrides a national matter such as what our people are facing. The fact is, the road is gazetted and [was] gazetted before the Law was brought into force. I said it earlier and I'll say it again, if they think that I am a fool and that I don't understand the current political environment in this country, they're making a big mistake. I'll say this to every single Member living in Bodden Town, East End and North Side, they are going to use this road issue to defeat you all at the polls. Take warning.

Madam Speaker, I know about these kinds of things, I've been through it, and I've seen what issues like this do. The only thing about this, Madam Speaker, different from the cadastral surveys, problems, et cetera is that back then they had Caymanians who got on the street and made one of the biggest demonstrations the country has faced. I'll tell you what, if some of those 18,000 people gather themselves, you might just face that kind of issue down here because people are feeling it, and I will go on to tell you why.

Madam Speaker, let all and sundry who want to debate, who want to continue to talk about the Law—and I said it when the Law was being passed—if it proves that it affects the national interest while trying to protect the national interest, then something has to be done to balance that whole matter.

You cannot have a board telling the Cabinet, *'you can't do this and I am not going to allow you to do this and I'm going to take you to court so you can't do this'*. Madam Speaker, I don't believe that is right. If we have a law that allows them to do it, which I believe is on the edge when they say that, I don't know all the sections of the law and I might even disagree with the lawyers, but who am I? I'm just a layman but I am a practical one. If it meant that I must give general direction, that's what I am doing.

Then, if you give general direction and that is not upheld you do the next thing, you come down here with an amended law and take it out; not to remove the law because we have and we need guidance and we didn't get it before; we got some guidance in different ways. I am saying that this issue of a board telling the Cabinet of this country that you can't do something as important as that, as it's affecting nearly 20,000 people daily and you can't move ahead fast enough to rectify it. Let us not say, *but we are doing something*. Yes, I am not saying that there are not some movements

being made, but there are a lot of movements that I believe are organised and generated to stop/slow down. I don't think that is right.

We cannot ignore the fact that people are hurting and children are hurting; business is hurting daily in this country. Yes, there have been governments that could not move; we gazetted it back in 2005, other governments came and made different additions and tried to rectify different things. We put in the second lien in Bodden Town—or wherever it started, I guess more down from the Savannah area. Mr. Gilbert McLean was the Minister then. Thus, governments have tried to do things throughout the country. *God*, look at the pounding, I and my government took for moving the West Bay Road so that we could house another entrance or so into West Bay. You know what that I did. It was a good thing but they didn't want that either. They beat me to pieces and accused me of everything in the world—they're still doing that. What that's done is opened up West Bay to now where we have over 15,000 people living there and more coming, more and more development coming. So, I want to see some things done so that we can protect ourselves. You've got to do that and it's not going to just be building a road, you're going to have to do more than that, Madam Speaker. Traffic and how we solve those problems but those are other debates to take place.

It is, Madam Speaker, affecting productivity and safety. There is a significant loss of productivity on a daily basis as a result of persons sitting in traffic for extended periods. Residents in the eastern districts rise at ridiculous times in the morning just to get to work on time, then they still get to work late; and they arrive back at home very late after work. For many months of the year, residents in some parts of the eastern districts leave their homes before the sunrises and get back home after dark. I'm sure the EIA which is being done will show what everyone already knows that the loss of productivity from traffic congestion in the eastern districts amounts to millions of dollars each year, if they go that far.

If they just don't worry about a bit of grass, a bit of water and some trees, if the assessment goes further than that, they can show those things. Those losses, Madam Speaker, are having negative impacts on business and commerce and are indirectly contributing to the increased cost of living which affects residents all over the Island; not only the residents who live in the eastern districts.

As traffic congestion grows, the morning peak hour gets longer and the evening peak hour gets longer so the actual productive workday is becoming shorter. Family time is nearly non-existent and the quality of life for persons experiencing the traffic congestion daily, is extremely poor. Parents either leave their children at home with a helper or alone to wait for the school bus; or they spend time giving their children breakfast and dressing them and helping them with homework in the car on the way to school and work in the mornings.

Then we want to talk about an assessment; *assess that*.

In the evenings, children go home to helpers or to wait on their own until their parents return home after dark. Is this the quality of life our future generations deserve when we talk about how much we're looking out for them? Don't talk and come into this debate with anything about *what else is causing it*. We know other things are causing it but we are addressing one of the big issues that is causing it.

Families struggle, they struggle enough already with daily challenges; adding traffic congestion which deprives them of valuable time they could be spending together, makes it that much worse.

Madam Speaker, while reduced travel times, less congestion, improved quality of life and more family time are important, an even more important reason to expedite the construction of the road is to improve safety. There are some areas particularly in the Lower Valley and Bodden Town where the existing roads are very narrow with little or no shoulders for pedestrians or cyclists. In these areas, there isn't much ability to widen the roads as there are houses close to the road. The solution to improve safety is to build the East-West Arterial which will provide an alternate route and reduce the volume on the existing road.

In those areas, because there are good communities there, people are gravitating to live there and building more homes; and we've seen all over the place, subdivisions and new homes being built. Therefore, what are you going to say now? You're going to tell Caymanians you can't do that? Is that what the House will do? It's easy for people to sit in an office and draw plans and think, *we can do this, we can do that; we need to protect this, we need to protect that*. What about the person who is suffering and waiting and waiting and going through all kind of struggles while that is being done? Those areas that I mentioned and other areas, Madam Speaker, are particularly dangerous areas, the high volume of two-way head-on traffic and as mentioned, no space for pedestrians and cyclists. A significant amount of the traffic is dump trucks, concrete trucks, container trucks and other heavy vehicles and mixed with that are school buses, public transport, tour buses, residents and tourists travelling the road on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, I don't know how many of us in this House except for those who live up there traverse there morning, noon and night. I have some traversing there, I go there. You have to go to Savannah to the Agriculture Department and when you see some of those big trucks coming, flying down the road; container trucks the same way.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: It's like they don't understand that the road is not built for speed nor do we have the space if something happens to negotiate it easily. It

seems like they don't care; they don't understand. Thus, as the traffic volume increases in those areas, so do the risks of head-on collisions. Statistics on car accidents show that we had an average of 56 car crashes a week in 2022 Island wide, totalling almost 3,000 and sadly, with 15 fatalities.

So, you'll say to me, *what you want us to do about that?* I want you to alleviate some of it by doing something with the traffic in that area that takes it and makes it better to be able to negotiate the road better.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that we all remember hurricane Ivan. I remember well. I tried to get up to East End and I had to stop way down and walk because you couldn't get in the car; only one road. I remember well, that the road from Bodden Town to East End was completely blocked in several sections and it took several days for the road to either be cleared or sections to be temporarily rebuilt in order to get supplies to East End; *supplies*.

The road along the coast, it's still vulnerable, and likely to be sadly damaged or destroyed God forbid, should we have another major hurricane. It was one of the main reasons in 2010/11 that I said we're *gonna* move that stretch of road down there which every year government has to spend millions and millions of dollars on because the little nor'westers that we get, slam into that lower end and block us sometimes.

Traffic we found at times was held up until after 1 o'clock in the day, can't get to work. We are an Island and we have vulnerable areas that we have to take cognisance of. No, a lot of things that maybe were done or shouldn't have been done but we know the things that need to be done now so don't look back on those things and say we are not doing this we are not doing that. No, God forbid that we have another hurricane.

The East-West Arterial, Madam Speaker, will provide a strong, safe and resilient route that will be able to withstand major storm events and will ensure that the eastern districts are not cut off in such events. That is why we are saying where it can go now, because we're not going to have that kind of damage that we have to worry about the water runoff, the water settling, et cetera. We know that there are areas that NRA [National Roads Authority] and whoever else are in the planning will have to be cognisant of.

Madam Speaker, it is imperative that we don't wait any longer to build the East-West Arterial and to build it to Lookout Gardens in Bodden Town as this will address the concerns I have spoken about. It will reduce congestion and travel times for residents in the eastern districts and it will improve the safety as well, reducing the chance of head-on collisions in the most heavily trafficked areas.

Most of all, Madam Speaker, building the East-West Arterial to Lookout Gardens immediately, will improve the quality of life for all affected residents.

Madam Speaker, we cannot wait any longer to do that, the residents in the eastern districts deserve

and have the right to the same quality of life as all residents in our Islands.

As the resolved section of the Motion says, the section from Hirst Road to Lookout Gardens is the least environmentally sensitive area. In this area, the road avoids or very minimally affects the central mangrove wetlands which we all know are the most sensitive environmental areas. In fact, the area between Hirst Road and Lookout Gardens is growing and developing as residential areas. Therefore, whether or not the road is extended, the area is being developed.

The main concerns that were identified for this area for the EIA were stormwater drainage and maintaining the natural flow of water; and I understand that hydrology studies are almost completed—that's what I hear. Once those concerns have been addressed, there is no reason the road cannot be continued to Lookout Gardens immediately.

If we must wait until the completion of the EIA, then a period to design the road after that, it could be almost two years before the construction begins and another year or more of construction. Madam Speaker, the residents of the eastern districts cannot suffer another three years without safety improvements and resiliency as well as reduced congestion and an overall better quality of life.

I will stop there, Madam Speaker. I know other Members want to speak and I do hope that what I have said does not offend but rather informs or assists to inform. Also, bear in mind the road is gazetted, gazetted before the Law was brought into force. Bear that in mind.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for West Bay North.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, thank you.

There is a saying Madam Speaker, *who feels it, knows it*.

An Hon. Member: True, true.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I've left West Bay 6.30 in the morning to go to Health City to try to reach back to the GAB (Government Administration Building) by 9.00. I can get to Health City by 7 o'clock, see who I have to see and leave there 7.30; and it will take me until 9 o'clock to get back from East End.

An Hon. Member: You're lucky if you get back then.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, on my way up, I passed the lines as high as Bodden Town where the gas stations are.

We have been blessed in West Bay, Madam Speaker, but [you know] when I realised how bad it was? From my very first speech I said to this country, swimming is one sport that will help to put us on the

map. The former Deputy Premier, the Member for Bodden Town West has reminded me over and over about that speech when I said, *we must get this pool*. However, there are other deciding factors, Madam Speaker, everything that happened has happened as I predicted; and things fall in place.

The Ministry of Education and Department of Education [Services] have worked with me and I am now getting the swimming pool at Clifton Hunter [High School]. We now have a swim team at the John Gray High School which I'm sponsoring; and I have said to the Members for North Side and East End, when the lessons start at Clifton Hunter, the two of you are going to have to sponsor either a Northeast swim team or a Clifton Hunter swim team, whichever it is.

I say all of that to say, when I went and found a coach who would help, do you know his first concern? Traffic. Getting there and getting back, he said would be his major problem. He did not ask for any pay. He has already gone through Darkness to Light [Training], everything. His one concern was traffic.

Thus, this problem must be addressed and addressed quickly. Whatever has to be done must be done; if we have to change the law, change the law. However, Cabinet must have its final say. We are who the people elected and we were elected to defend and help our people.

To my team, every other government has had a chance. They have had eight years, four years, 12 years, different numbers of years and they haven't done it. Let us be the ones to change this and get this correct. The people on the eastern side of the country deserve some help.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The honourable Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

First of all, Madam Speaker, I really want to thank the Honourable Member for West Bay West for bringing this Motion to this House.

Madam Speaker, this is one of the issues that is a big problem for most of the people I represent in the eastern district of Bodden Town West; a big problem. I can tell you, I personally see it first-hand in my own household and also with others; when our kids and our families are literally leaving home while it is still dark.

Madam Speaker, *woe be unto anyone* if there is an accident early in the morning or in the evening. We saw quite recently in George Town around Pirates' Week when there was a traffic jam and everyone in George Town basically went crazy. While for them it would have been an abnormal Friday evening, for many of us in the eastern districts it was just another

Friday. So I am happy to some extent, that people in George Town had an opportunity briefly—while I wouldn't wish it on anyone—to see what it is that the people in the eastern districts deal with on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, I came across this article and I'd ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to give this to the Honourable Speaker, please. I also have some extra copies.

The thing Madam Speaker, which jumped out at me in this article entitled "How Sitting in Traffic Jam Can Harm Your Health," is the part I'm going to be reading from about pollution. Actually, it is a short article so I'll just read it in its entirety.

It says, "**Traffic congestion increases vehicle emissions and degrades ambient air quality, studies have shown excess morbidity and mortality for drivers and commuters, stressed and frustrated motorists, encouraging road rage and reduced health of motorists. Commuters who are exposed to air pollution, especially those riding in non-air-conditioned vehicles such as autos, e-rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and motorcycles, double their health risk.**

Aside from chronic lung diseases, air pollution can cause blood pressure to rise and inflame the arteries, increasing heart attack and stroke risk. Blood pressure goes up with increased traffic pollutants, and electrocardiogram changes show decreased blood flow to the heart.

Pollution that gathers inside cars in traffic jams and at red traffic lights is far higher than that found in cars that are moving. It contributes to lung cancer, asthma, and other respiratory diseases, besides heart disease and stroke. All of these can be fatal. Pollution at intersections is 29 times higher than those found in free-flowing traffic. At intersections, vehicles slow down, stop, rev up to move when lights turn green, and they are closer together. The cars move slowly, so that drivers are exposed for longer. As the output is ongoing, the pollution does not disperse but lingers and accumulates. The cars waiting in traffic jams or red lights contain up to 40 per cent more pollution than those that are moving.

[Madam Speaker, it goes on to say] **long commutes eat up exercise time and are associated with higher weight, lower fitness levels, and higher blood pressure—all strong predictors of heart disease, diabetes, and some types of cancer.**

Being exposed to the daily hassles of traffic can lead to higher chronic stress. One of the stress triggers while driving during a traffic jam is impatience—having to wait for the traffic to move and dealing with the mistakes of other motorists on the road. Impatience, if not handled at the beginning, tends to turn into resentment, aggressive driving and anger- which all can lead to road rage. Stress, is a 'killer disease' that makes people vulnerable to other diseases and even depression.

[Madam Speaker, it goes on to also say] **some commuters who are caught in traffic mess are also deprived of sleep, especially those who had to get up early the next day to avoid the morning rush and get to work on time. Sleep deprivation can also affect performance, attention, and long-term memory. Moreover, lack of sleep can cause anxiety, exhaustion, frustration, impulsive behaviour, lower immunity, and some mental health problems. It also encourages drug and alcohol [use].**

Traffic jams also don't allow commuters to use restrooms if required, causing holding of urine for long period of times which can cause urinary infections. Urinary infections can sometimes be so severe as to cause acute urinary retention. If this happens in an elderly individual it can lead to psychotic behaviour.

If a commuter held up in traffic jam feels thirsty and is not carrying a water bottle, it can cause low blood pressure due to dehydration.

If a commuter stuck in a traffic jam as a medical emergency like a heart attack, they might not be able to reach the hospital in time for treatment."

Madam Speaker, when I came across that article and I looked at all the potential health risks that people face in traffic, and then go through the census and look at some of Cayman's results with regards to illnesses and so forth; many of those things raised are found with a lot of our people. We have a tendency Madam Speaker, to sit back and sometimes blame a lot of different things. Madam Speaker, if you look at most of these things that affect us in Cayman, it's actually lifestyle.

Some of the lifestyle we can say is our own. I like hamburgers, pizza and chocolate. That's something that I can personally fix from a lifestyle standpoint. However, Madam Speaker, there are also other factors that are external; things that are beyond our people's control. Those are the things that we need to fix.

Madam Speaker, one of the things that really boggled my mind maybe about a year and change ago when I did my medical was, I found out that I had a vitamin D deficiency. I remember doing a video on it and there were many other people who came to me afterwards and said they actually also have a vitamin D deficiency. That kind of really jumped out Madam Speaker, because here we are living in the Caribbean, I mean, this is a tropical place; we've got sunlight year-round but the number of our people who literally have a vitamin D deficiency is actually surprising.

Then when I really started to look at it—because I do have to take medication for it twice a week to build up vitamin D and wherever I can get sunlight, I get sunlight—Madam Speaker, that is something that is difficult for many families who their children are leaving to go to school or they are going to work when it is still dark outside; when they reach back home it is dark. When you work inside the offices or the buildings that

they are in, they are not in the sunlight. Madam Speaker, yesterday when we were talking about the SPS and we were talking about health, these are the kinds of things that we need to look at from a health standpoint in terms of what it is that we can do to help our people.

Madam Speaker, why I am really happy that the Member for West Bay West has brought this Motion. Many of us on that side remember Hurricane Ivan. We remember Mariners Cove coming over into the street.

An Hon. Member: Yea. Mmm hmm.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, we were cut off from the other side of the Island. No access to the airport, no access to the hospital.

Now, Madam Speaker, once you pass near around Savannah Meadows, if there is an accident that's it; the eastern district is cut off. We are talking about tens of thousands of people being cut off from a lot of essential services in this country. While I do understand Madam Speaker, that—and I will be the first to tell you—yeah it needs to be done, because I can tell you in my constituency Bodden Town West, we have sea level that ranges from 6 ft. to 60 ft. above sea level.

Equally, Madam Speaker, I am also conscious of the drainage, where our water from that area runs off into the wetlands. I'm conscious Madam Speaker, that if you go to put a road there and you don't have the proper drainage and the proper everything there, I may end up creating a bowl for my people to live in.

I can tell you there are Members inside this House, there are people in Cumber Avenue and different places who will tell you that once the road went in behind [there] they literally became a bowl; and every time there is heavy rainfall, they're basically flooded. Therefore, it can't be a situation where I have to sit down and choose between traffic and your home being flooded.

In this body, Madam Speaker, we have enough intelligent people. Also, I can tell you I've dealt with staff at NRA [National Roads Authority] who are very competent; they know the culverts and the drainage. I can say that the Minister is also one who is very passionate in terms of actually getting things done; and this is the kind of infrastructure that will actually be meaningful to people's lives, it will impact their lives in a positive way.

Madam Speaker, the one thing when the Member for West Bay West brought this Motion to me, that really brought it home for me, just one simple phrase, "**one more hour of sleep**". That's all we're asking for our children, our grand-children, our parents and everyone in the eastern districts; we just want one more hour of sleep per day.

Last night, Madam Speaker, I left here almost quarter to 11—I understand you guys went on to 1.30 a.m. My reason, Madam Speaker, was that my son started his first O Level exams today and I wanted to

go home and at least see him before he went to sleep. I had to do that Madam Speaker, because I knew he'd have to be out the house at 6 o'clock this morning, and I knew I wasn't going to see him this morning.

The question is, Madam Speaker, how many people also—especially when you have two-car families where one parent is going out early to the school run or whatever—don't get to see the kids in the morning and sometimes don't get to see other family members because they leave so early sometimes.

Madam Speaker, when we talk about improving the quality of people's lives, these are the kinds of initiatives. As the Government is preparing the budget for this year, I would love to see funds being set aside to at least get some kind of traffic [sic] [traction] or some kind of movement on this road. Since 2005, this road has been gazetted. Hurricane Ivan was almost 19 years ago, almost a whole generation it will take us to get this road in and this is high time this needs to be done.

I can tell you also, Madam Speaker, that a lot of people coming from further east, cut through Northward, Will T area and so forth, which is also using residential areas as a kind of highway to some extent just trying to cut traffic out which is also making some of our neighbourhoods unsafe.

Thus, Madam Speaker, I am very happy that the Member for West Bay West brought this and I'd like to sincerely thank him very much on behalf of the people I represent in Bodden Town West. Also, I want to thank everyone in advance for supporting this Motion because this is the kind of Motion, this is the kind of infrastructural development that makes a difference in people's lives. As you said before, my good friend from West Bay West, one more hour of sleep.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Honourable Minister for Planning, Agriculture and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to offer my support to this Private Member's Motion No. 8 for Improving the Traffic Flow Congestion in the Eastern Districts by building the East-West Arterial from Hirst Road to Lookout Gardens commencing immediately.

Madam Speaker, as the Elected Member for the constituency for North Side, providing additional traffic solutions is significant to my constituents.

Madam Speaker, it should come as no surprise but I believe that those who live in the eastern districts deserve shorter commute times—as we heard previous speakers say. The current commute experienced by my constituents can be described as one word, "unacceptable".

Madam Speaker, I would like to state that the increase in traffic flow supports Broad Outcome 3 [of the 2022-2024 Strategic Policy Statement]: Providing Solutions to Improve the Well-Being of Our People so they can Achieve their Full Potential. Simply put, shorter commutes mean there is more time for family and community.

Madam Speaker, when I travel in the afternoon, going back up to the eastern side of the Island and I see so many children alongside the road playing, waiting on their mother and father to come from work, that's a lot of idle time for them. There is no quality family time in the eastern districts, Madam Speaker. For those who have to come to George Town and spend over 90 minutes to get back to the eastern districts, that is unacceptable.

Madam Speaker, the mental health [benefit] for our people by spending less time in vehicles, not just from East End and North Side but from Bodden Town; as the Elected Member for Red Bay said, Prospect, those areas, also Marina Drive, Savannah; even the people in Newlands, they are affected by it too sir, they are all affected by it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, to paint a picture according to the data from NRA, as I said before, those traveling from Lookout Gardens—from Bodden Town East—have an average commute of 55 minutes each way. That means that by the end of a five-day work week, assuming one trip into George Town Madam Speaker, these drivers are spending almost 10 hours in their vehicles for the week.

Madam Speaker, those traveling from North Side during the peak hours spend an average of 90 minutes [in the morning], and this is NRA's statistics. However, I think it's a little longer than that.

Madam Speaker, for me sometimes to get to that Government Building by 7.15-7.30 a.m., I have to be up from 4.30/ 5 o'clock in the morning. I have to be out of my door before 5.15 if I want to get there. If I want to get down to that radio station that I will be on in the morning, I better make sure that I have everything ready that I can come out of my door by 5.15. Madam Speaker, if I don't come out by 5.15 I can find the traffic by Moon Bay. I have seen pictures where it's been almost to Frank Sound.

Madam Speaker, this is of national importance. We're talking about improving the quality of people's lives, Madam Speaker. This is part of it.

Madam Speaker, there are so many things that my people in North Side would love to do in the afternoons like go to PTA [Parent-Teacher Association] meetings and they can't get to them. Then we wonder why some of our children become the idle hands of the devil's playground. It's because they are affected, they don't have a father and mother to be able to spend those last hours with them when they get out of school.

Some of my people, by the time they get to North Side they are saying, *well, I am so tired I can't even get to my PTA meeting tonight.* We have to host a meeting for the district councils or whatever we're doing around 8 o'clock at night because by the time they get that side, get the children home, probably grab one little meal to eat, there is no time left for them. There is no quality time for the people on the eastern side of the Island.

Madam Speaker, I don't think anybody in this House says that the EIA shouldn't be done but we have to realise too at the same time, people's lives matter. If we are so worried about the environment, the Member for Bodden Town West just listed a bunch of statistics that I actually had. It looks like he got a copy of my report too.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: So, I had to cut that out of my speech, I just crossed it out. I am not going to repeat it. He just mentioned it. Is that not part of fixing the environment, but yet we want talk about ReGen. Pollution is on this side. *Oh we're not worried about that, allow the Caymanians to stay in traffic; only the poor people live up that side, we don't worry about them.* That is how the people feel right now.

We say that we are here for the people of this country. Madam Speaker, I was elected to make sure that I support the people of this country so that they can have a better life. Madam Speaker, when I talk to the people at NRA and they say we really don't need an EIA for that section of the road. What we need is just to make sure that we are putting the culverts in the right places so that, as the Member for Bodden Town West stated earlier, we are not holding up the water on one side to cause flooding issues for those in the Will T and Northward areas, et cetera.

Madam Speaker, one thing which really jumps out to me is the section of the Newlands area, from Newlands to Will T, there was no need for an EIA there. That is where the lowest point is right now. Madam Speaker, that development is already built around the road. There was no need for it there, but as soon as you get out from there now, we need [it].

The Speaker: Honourable Member, we have now reached the hour of 4.30 p.m.

Can I have a motion for the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) to continue past the hour of 4.30 p.m.?

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, I rise to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) to enable the business of the House to continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended to enable the business of the House to continue beyond the hour of 4.30.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Honourable Minister, please continue.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we are talking about a road that was gazetted from 2005.

Madam Speaker, it seems that people who have been here have forgotten the aftermath of Ivan, the destruction it did through Bodden Town and East End when that section was cut off. Yet no, we still can't put a road through them. Everything in the eastern districts is called wetland now. There's a new term for swamp land up that way now; wetland. Then they turn around and there's no more value to it. Oh, we come up there and want to buy land which my grandfathers and my North Siders have kept and tried to pass down to their children for so many years. Now they're deciding it doesn't make sense for them to hold the land anymore because you know what, my children probably aren't even going to get to it so I might as well sell it to the developers, let them have it and then I get to enjoy the money at least. It looks like that is what is done.

Madam Speaker, I am almost convinced that some people don't want this road to start because certain people don't own the land yet in the places where it has to go.

An Hon. Member: Preach!

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: That is what I believe it is. However, we will see today who supports this road. We'll see.

Madam Speaker, this general route was once in a pre-survey for a Geotechnical Analysis and therefore it can be described, not as anything in pristine habitat as they talked about, because when the honourable Arden McLean was Minister for roads he cleared the whole path. He cleared the road from Newlands to Frank Sound. So, people go out there and show these beautiful pictures of the eastern districts; beautiful, nice photos but nothing to do with the road at all.

Madam Speaker, if you go on Google Maps today, you can see the trail that Mr. Arden McLean had cleared from then, to do all the testing so that we could know what we were preparing ourselves for to go forward. Then you're hearing all these people get on the bandwagon and say, *oh we going to tear up all these mangroves*. Nonsense, it's already gone!

This road is going through not even 1 per cent of what they call wetland. I have it somewhere here

from the Department of Environment, it was 8,500 and something acres of land and not even 1 per cent of that. Again, there is a picture out there that we're tearing [down] this wetland. *Oh, they want to push development up that way now. No one is worried about the young Caymanian who can't get a house. He must go and pay top dollar for land prices?*

Madam Speaker, it is really disturbing that it has to come down to this for us to debate this, to even talk about it. It shouldn't have to come to this.

Madam Speaker, this to me is of as national [an] importance as it is to building a house and allowing our Caymanians to own their own homes. It is up there in the same bracket. We just need to figure out where our priorities are. Also, remind ourselves who we represent because I don't know who some people represent in here, but I know who I represent.

It seems like this has become a political football and they want to kick it this way and that way and say some people support it or *I don't know if I going to support it you know, I might hide around the back*. We are going to see who will support it today so tell them to go hide and let the people know because you know what, you fooled them one time but you won't fool them again so let's see. We will see how many times it's going to get kicked around this place today.

Madam Speaker, every single government before time had the opportunity to build this road. Not one person, not one of them actually got up and said we're going to the North Side to Frank Sound and then we'll go into East End.

I must give the Progressive government [credit] the last time that Mr. Arden [McLean] was there, that was a good push. They were building roads and were going east and all kinds of things then; however, it seems like we have slowed down.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, it was not because at the time we weren't sitting apart on opposite sides of field. I was embarrassed this morning to sit here and listen to the back and forth over one small little thing. I said, look at these kindergarten children up in here. I'd imagine the children could be watching this now and saying look at my world leaders. It took us over half an hour back and forth when we could have probably gone through the whole thing and been done. Matter of fact, we would have been further ahead now if we had just continued with how the Order Paper was from this morning; probably been way out the door now. No, we had the back and forth like a ping pong ball up and down.

Madam Speaker, the people of the eastern districts—as the Minister for Bodden Town East always says, just one more hour. Can we get one more hour of sleep? I know there are people out there saying, *I don't believe the Minister support that road you know, you see him doing all kinds of things in Town and doing the*

road in Town but I don't see him saying anything about coming east to fix that road.

Madam Speaker, there's nobody who wants that road more than I. I would donate my time in the night to go start pushing it if I had the opportunity to go.

However, Madam Speaker, I have people around me who have to agree with me for me to get there. They have to get on board with me to get to North Side. I don't think they're going to play this football game and say, *he's the Minister of roads so go talk to him*. Like what Mr. Arden said that night at the meeting, if your side of the boat leaking, my side leaking too; so we all in one boat together.

When they come and say, *boy, how come you are not pushing that?* I hope *unna* can stand up and tell the people why—because we are waiting on one study. Madam Speaker, a study that has almost doubled its price since we had the meetings. Now, I don't know but as far as I see, my mind tells me something is wrong there because they've got to be some road blocks in the middle of that. Then to tell me that this Parliament can't go and start that road is a serious problem.

We need to figure out where the roadblocks are because there is no one entity or department that should be binding this Parliament—I never signed up for this. I never signed up for anything in Cabinet that Cabinet Ministers or Members in this Parliament don't have as much power as they thought they had. That one board or one person has more power than everybody else.

Madam Speaker, if there are certain laws that need to be changed, they need to be changed. I don't care who brought the law, it needs to be changed!

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Don't tell me I'm wrong, there is no perfect law. Don't tell me that you are going to bound everybody's hand—some of the highest people in the land—so that we can't get it done. We spoke about it in the last SPS and we're speaking about it again in this SPS.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: And it was in the Opposition's SPS too.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Deputy Speaker: The last one they did, yeah.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: It has been traveling through every document that came to this Parliament but it's not going anywhere. Yet we still can't carry it for those people up Bodden Town or those people in East End or North Side.

Madam Speaker, all it takes is one accident, one single accident and you can't get across. I remember people just a few weeks ago in that building, told me they weren't leaving the building until later on because there was an accident and the road was blocked so they decided to stay in the building. I don't need to call his name he knows who he is.

Yet, we see the problem, we hear the problem—and you can look out the window and look right across the cricket field and see the traffic backed up; we see it. However, you know what, *I will stay here a little longer because I am not going to join them*.

Madam Speaker, I have been in that traffic that when accidents happened I had to pull off the road to sleep because it's 5 o'clock in the morning before it was cleared. I've had people who came to this country, who love this country, and have missed their flights because of an accident and they could not get back to the airport. Now go back and look at the reviews when the people write about that. Yet we want more tourists to the Island and we want to push them east; *let's go east*.

Madam Speaker, we have to put the infrastructure in. There is not one country that can survive with a one-way lane going in and coming out. Madam Speaker, what happens on the day that the road is blocked and my people in North Side have to get back to the George Town Hospital and they can't get there by the ambulance because of a serious [accident] or something.

Madam Speaker, God forbid any natural disaster happens and the Police and everybody from this side have to get to the eastern side of the Island to help our people. Are we going to make the helicopter make 100 trips to get them there? No, we don't think about that. [Imagine], one earthquake which can cause big damage and we have one single road that is blocked, and no one from George Town could go help our people in the eastern districts.

Madam Speaker, this one rides heavily on my heart. When I walked into these Halls, I never thought I would have the task to build this road; and when I finally knew, I was happy. I said, you know what, we're going east. I sat down and told the Members alongside me, *guys, we're building and we're going east*. I asked the Deputy Premier at the time to support me with the money for this road and he did so; but again, we ran into a roadblock. Sometimes the money is there and then you get a roadblock.

What we did then was try to make sure that we fixed all of the other parts of the roads, got rid of all the bottlenecks, widen the lanes going down to—I think that is Crighton Boulevard—getting prepared, that by the time this road is ready, all of that was done; we're ready to go.

I have to thank the previous Minister for roads because he laid a lot of the groundwork so that we could get going. There's no need to deny that.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Some plant and some water.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: That is exactly true sir; some plant and some water. However, there are days that he watered off of the previous Minister's [planting] too so he had his opportunity.

Madam Speaker, all I am saying—and I am going to make this very short because as I said we shouldn't even be down here talking about it and decisions really weigh heavily on your shoulders. I have heard people talk about having the devil on one shoulder and the Lord on the other sometimes, but I'm carrying the burden of East-West on my shoulders. Future decisions have to be made and I am hoping that my colleagues sitting on this side are supportive of this road.

Madam Speaker, I'm hoping when the budget comes up that we are supporting because we talked about it again. Because this is one time you might not like what Jay Ebanks is *gonna* tell you, but what I tell you will be the truth and I am not going to lie to my people. Don't put it in the SPS if you're not planning to deliver it; tell the people straight and honest. Let's be honest because we can move and look to do something else. Let's not leave a false dream or a false hope that we're coming to deliver. That's the politics of it Ma'am. I don't play politics with my people in my district. Madam Speaker, I promised my people that I will always be straight and honest with them. Sometimes that might not be the best thing because sometimes you get a lot of people hating you because you tell them the truth. At least they can go back and say, *well he was straight and honest with me*.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, all I am saying is that I am in full support of this Motion here today. We need to remind ourselves who we were elected for because sometimes we get lost within that one to three-year period. Then when that nine-month period comes in you remember every soul; even the ones you used to pass on the road and say I am not picking him up. You're picking him up now or saying, how are you doing today. That's the only time that some people remember people.

I remember saying to myself, I always admired the way that the honourable Kurt Tibbetts did his politics and as I call him, the kingmaker. That man touched his people all the time, checked on them, made sure they were alright. I said to myself when I run, I want to make sure that I be exactly like that, I want to make sure that I never forget my people, that I go look for them and make sure that I'm there for them if they call me no matter what.

Madam Speaker, anyone of my people, no matter where I am can call me any time of night. I don't hide my number from anyone. There may be times that I can't answer my phone like now. You don't even get a driver to support you but they want you to be down here

until 2 o'clock at night, but nobody worries about us going to the east. That's another thing.

All of the Ministers around here should have their own drivers. You go to every other country and they treat you good as gold; give you a car, even give you security. The Deputy Governor could tell you about when he goes away. [Home he's] probably the only [Deputy] Governor who actually has to walk because he doesn't have a car and everybody else pulling up. Yet we are the Jewel of the Caribbean, but we treat our own selves the worst.

Madam Speaker, one thing I remember, seeing when Mr. Jaime Fox got ill and he was working on a movie—the last part of it—and as quickly as that they replaced him with a stunt [double]. A reminder that if I run off the road out there or anything happens to me they'll replace me just like that. They may even want to replace me now because I am not a "yes" man. I am going to ask the hard questions; you have to win me over because I was elected as an Independent Member. I am not a PACT Member. I am an independent Member of the PACT Government

An Hon. Member: Amen!

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: And I will continue asking the hard questions. Some people might not like it but they'll have to put up with me or they can always tell me, I don't want to work with you any longer.

Madam Speaker, I never hitch a ride down there, my car is always right there and ready to go anytime of the week. My bag, I carry everything in one bag all the time because nowadays you don't know.

Madam Speaker, I just want to tell you, we need to get this road done. If this Motion here today can't push this road forward then we need to have another conversation amongst ourselves. We need to figure out as I said before, what is it going to take us to get there? As I said, I'm hoping that my colleagues around here are supporting this upcoming budget to make sure we have sufficient funding to build the road because I can see plenty funding ahead but it may be redirected to different areas. However, I know one thing, my people didn't sign me on here just to say yes to something.

Madam Speaker, I know there are other things we need to implement and we're looking at putting in maybe even a dedicated lane going through our East-West; we're even looking at putting in a service lane for the East-West because we want to put all the ducting in there that we no longer have this problem where every time something happens, you have the Water Authority or you have to [change] polls and the road has to be dug up. We want to make sure that all of that is in a service lane so it does not upset the flow of the traffic. We want to have that there.

We want to do this sustainably too. Madam Speaker, I remember I saw a photo where the centre part of the East-West had solar panels. I said, *boy, we*

are talking about sustainability here now. We can move trees out the way, build the road, use the median for solar and boy, that's almost a win-win. I mentioned that to a few people up to today and I haven't heard a word back on whether we should do it. I've asked the NRA to even look into it because I tried to be balanced.

There is not one person who can say that I never met with them. I sat down with the environmentalists, I sat down with the mangrove rangers, I sat down with Sustainability Cayman; I have heard them all now. I spent time with them, I tried to come to a compromise with them on how we can actually move forward. I had to get everybody on at National Trust so I met with them. They were on board too, just don't come on their land; that's what they want. However, at the same time they want to tell you to go on this man's land, and then they get up and tell him, *you shouldn't be building on your land*, but they just put the road on his land.

Madam Speaker, if they were so worried about keeping the side of the roads green and they wanted to own both sides of the road that nobody would build on it, they should not be going through their land. I should be going through their land that way they can say, *well, they own the two sides of this road and nobody will build on it*. Rather, they tell me no, no, we want you to move this. Move this road; you *gotta* move it this way, bend it that way and carry it this way, through these people's house; but are not worried about who lives in there, just to get it out of their way.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I heard a lot of talk too about how we should be going up high, building a bridge across, but not one soul remembers, *it takes cash to care*.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mmmm, hmmm.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: When you tell them how much it will cost to start to do that, *Oh my God, we didn't realise it would cost that much*.

Madam Speaker, on this particular road, I am hoping to hear from the rest of my colleagues here today that they are supportive of this road because I know I am. Politics aside, I know sometimes we joke amongst each other, but deep down I do believe the Opposition supports this road too. At least I know the Minister for George Town North supports it. Also, the Minister for Red Bay supports it; I heard him publicly say it. I saw Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell put his hand up and said that he supports it. Thus, I really do believe that the Opposition supports it.

An Hon. Member: Let's get to the vote.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I agree with you 100 per cent, Member for Red Bay. As I said, we shouldn't even be here; let's just get to the vote.

I think I have said enough on it now ma'am. I am going to leave it to whomever else but I just want to say there's not one soul out there who can say that Jay Ebanks doesn't support this road.

An Hon. Member: Amen.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I 100 per cent support building this road. I want them to know that. So, I don't want anyone pointing their fingers at me and saying, *I did not support this road*. Because anytime I find the roadblocks I'm coming to the people and telling them what the roadblocks are. As the people will see in the upcoming months, they will see how much funding will be in the budget for the East-West; we'll definitely find out and see.

I hope to continue this conversation in a few weeks in Cabinet and then we will take it from there. However, as I said, it rests heavily on my shoulders and people's fate is determined by the direction they go. I am telling you now, I hope that I have the support for it and I am not just being misled blindly because as I said, this small bag is always packed.

Thank you all and have a good day.

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

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I don't have very much to say because we have listened to the debate and rationale for what is being proposed. Madam Speaker, I recognise we have another seven Private Members' Motions to consider so in the interest of moving things along, I'd like to signal to the Parliament that the official Opposition will support the Motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Private Member's Motion before us today is Motion No. 8 of 2022-2023: Improving Traffic Flow Congestion in the Eastern Districts. There are four whereas [statements], and there are two that really stand out to me that affect the people in the constituency that I represent. I just want to read those Madam Speaker, and it says:

“AND WHEREAS the Eastern districts residents are at a disadvantage in sleep quality and

family quality because of the long commute to and from work;

AND WHEREAS Eastern district residents are more prone to accidents and tiredness on the job and these constituents are struggling to maintain a decent lifestyle desiring just one more hour of sleep;”

Madam Speaker, the alarm goes off at 4.30 in the morning for the average person who lives in East End. Let's just say they have two kids who go to school in George Town, shortly after that the kids get up, get dressed and they leave East End at 5.30 a.m. The kids finish their sleep in the back of the car. They get to Town fairly early because they got up early to avoid the traffic. Kids go inside with the parent, parent gets breakfast for them and then take them to school.

This affects the quality of life because on the return journey they're going back home and it is night. When the kids get back home, parents hustling, bustling preparing meals for them to eat and they go straight to bed; no quality of life.

The mover of the Motion spoke earlier on the growth of the [eastern] districts of Bodden Town, North Side and East End, and based on the 2021 census, the Eastern districts [sic] [East End] grew in that period of time from 2010 to 2021 by 31.2 per cent. This shows while not growing as much as some of the other Eastern districts we are growing as well. However, that means there are more cars on the road and more risks of accidents. More risks of accidents with one road certainly creates a major problem.

All the speakers before me have mentioned one thing in common, the experience of Hurricane Ivan. At that time, I was living in West Bay and my parents in East End and it was extremely difficult trying to make my way to East End to check on my parents.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Deputy Speaker: Getting past that, I still have the same problem; a single lane going to East End after you pass the Savannah/Newlands area. God forbid if there is an accident, even a small accident, and it's even worse if someone dies, you can't get through and do business.

The Member for North Side spoke about tourism and how it affects tourism and how people get left when the flight leaves without them. We must be able to find solutions to this current problem.

I want to state for the record as well that this is a very emotive and vexing issue for the people of East End—the people who gave me the job to stand here representing them today. I stand to say that I support the construction and building of this road, while it is not a panacea, because other measures and solutions have to be undertaken.

Again, the Member for North Side who is also the Minister for NRA, spoke about that briefly as well. The Government is quite aware and they are working

hard to try to ensure that the solutions they find would provide relief to the 18.5 thousand people who live in Bodden Town, North Side and East End.

The Member for Bodden Town West touched on productivity, and a quick calculation using the basic minimum wage, we're losing an average quarter-million dollars a day. That's just my quick calculation of the 18.5 thousand persons, divided by two, times six, times four, approximately a quarter-million dollars that we're losing in productivity. That is very, very conservative.

Madam Speaker, what actually just came to mind is when one of our young parliamentarians mentioned in their debate that, *it's no longer 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m., it's 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m.* but I am going to change that a little bit. It is 4.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. for us in East End.

I don't want anyone to take it that just because I am elected I come to work at any time. I leave home and I do it deliberately to see the traffic patterns coming from East End to George Town; and I've recorded several of them. I make notes of where I am at certain times and on average when I drive out of my yard at 2662 Seaview Road, East End to come to the government building, it's 2.5 hours minimum.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Deputy Speaker: Everybody knows where I live. They found it a few days after elections so I don't think they forgot it.

The other Members also spoke passionately, especially the Member for North Side, and while I don't want to go too much into their contribution, I want to say that I support this; however, yes, there are also some environmentally sensitive areas where we have to consider mitigating risks. We must do that along with other measures to alleviate the traffic issues.

It will mean making some hard decisions too. The Member for Red Bay didn't agree with some of the decisions that we took, like restricting the importation of cars and things like that but certainly these are issues that must be considered as well.

Then there are other impacts like mental health issues; environmental impacts, from what the Member for Bodden Town West mentioned for example, about engines running for three hours from East End; road rage because you are so frustrated; and not just the productivity [lost] on the way to work, but the productivity at work as well is affected.

Madam Speaker, I don't claim that I am an environmentalist, but I understand how important the environment is to us, especially with global warming.

However, again, I cannot in good conscience not support this Motion on behalf of the constituents who elected me to represent them and who have been advocating to me for relief. By no means am I advocating that we must do the construction without due consideration for the environment, but we must do

something in the near-term to give our people hope and to ensure that the quality of life improves.

While I will be satisfied in the near term with the road getting to Frank Sound, I do expect and I will be advocating as well for it to eventually come into East End to the High Rock Road and have the John McLean Drive connect with it somehow. However, we must put our collective efforts together to provide relief to our constituencies, especially Bodden Town, North Side and East End. This is a very, very emotive issue for not only East End but we heard the Members for North Side and Bodden Town West as well as the Member for West Bay West—who doesn't even live in East End, but understands the ramifications of how we have progressed over the last several years.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, while I won't repeat a lot of what has been said already, I just want the people of East End and the whole Cayman Islands to know that I support the building of this road, and taking due consideration to those environmentally sensitive areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Honourable Minister for Bodden Town East.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

I want to thank all those Members who remember the very catchy phrase, *one more hour sleep*. Madam Speaker, I rise to give my contribution on this Motion No. 8 of 2022-2023.

Madam Speaker, this is a national issue on the subject of traffic and I have not only gotten calls and pictures of our traffic woes from my constituents but from persons overseas in Fort Lauderdale who love their Island but their main concern was traffic.

Cannot get to work, can't get to school, can't get to lunch, can't get sleep, can't get to your loved ones after a storm, and can't get to the airport to catch your flight because of a simple accident; you know why, because of traffic.

Madam Speaker, **"If your commute has you sitting in traffic for a prolonged period of time, doctors have a warning for you. New Neuroscience Research from the University of British Columbia shows, exposure to traffic pollution—even as little as two hours—leads to decreased brain function."** Carbon monoxide poisoning from sitting in a car too long, and high concentrations of the carbon monoxide in less than five minutes can kill, and the list goes on.

Madam Speaker, I have a personal experience with this. It happened just this morning when I got home around 2.12 a.m. from a long session of Parliament trying to do the people of this country's business. Madam Speaker, most people who saw me on the road would

think I'm coming from somewhere else. They didn't take a picture.

Madam Speaker, my young children who are under 10, woke me up at 4.30 wanting to get ready for school. They are up playing at 4.00 a.m. and out of the house in the dark and they get home in the dark. Madam Speaker, people who have children older, don't have the same concern. Persons who are retired in George Town don't have the same issue. We as parents in the eastern districts are the ones who are suffering. If you want to take your spouse or a friend for dinner after work, you have to go to the restaurant in the same old 14 hour clothes and 14 hour bath; not that fresh feeling and new garbs that all would feel so nice in. We are suffering, Madam Speaker, in every kind of way.

When I call for a public meeting at 7.00 p.m. it's so hard for persons of the public to hear what their leaders have to say in person. Imagine the constituents can't even get home to cook for their families anymore. Madam Speaker, I must not offer my constituents food at my meetings as they say that's treating? [Well] Madam Speaker, treating it shall be; turtle and conch.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I understand the concerns of my people. I understand what it means to get one more hour sleep, Madam Speaker. I am not going to be long on this, a lot has been said.

This politics thing is serious, Madam Speaker. Imagine, especially for Bodden Town, people for 40 years have asked for a public dock and a public boat ramp and it took little old me, the unassuming one to come along and say, let me tick off all of these things that politicians throughout the years were using as a political football to try to win their seat back; promising this and promising that. Madam Speaker, I don't want to promise the East-West anymore.

I got elected and pushed and got that boat ramp and got that dock. Thanks to the [then] Deputy Premier from Cayman Brac East who was the Minister that helped me achieve that goal.

Madam Speaker, this road has always been kicked around as a political football for over 20 years as I can remember it, or earlier; and I intend to push this through also.

Madam Speaker, the ReGen Project or ISWMS—I was a Minister who brought this forward—came to Caucus just a few weeks ago and the presenters said that the EIA will be in a phased manner. Why not the East-West Arterial?

Madam Speaker, no one has to ask if I am publicly supporting this road. This EIA thing, I have mixed feelings about it. I respect the environment and I will talk about that. What I think EIA should mean is Expedite Immediately and Aggressively.

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, let's build the road, Hirst Road to Lookout [Gardens].

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, no one can come in this country and do an EIA by themselves you know. Someone needs to request that EIA to be done and the terms need to be set.

Let's change these terms, Madam Speaker, it's only a dead man and a fool can't change their minds. We are responsible adults who have all come together, be it as crazy as persons might have thought, but lasted longer than many thought they would. We can last longer. I have shown my responsible nature in caring for the environment.

Madam Speaker, I've protected more marine areas than any other country or any other Minister in the region; no-fish areas and protected areas of the ocean. I got killed for some of it by my locals.

An Hon. Member: Yeah, I know.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: When the Chief Officer came to me and asked, *you want to go out for more public consultation?* I said, *tell me what public consultation was done.* I was satisfied and I said, *no more public consultation; let us do what is right.* I want my grandchildren and my great-grandchildren to eat conch and be able to find one gillumbo though they can't eat that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Madam Speaker, Sir Alden, Elected Member for Red Bay and I, tried to change the law but we had friendly fire on board. You know what friendly fire is Madam Speaker? It's a term they use in the army when one of their own members shoot their own colleagues.

Most people who object to this consideration don't live in the stress we do in the East, Madam Speaker. As I said, and as was said across the road, *let's get to the vote.* Therefore, I won't be long, Madam Speaker, not only do I support this 2000 per cent, but I want my people [to have] the relief they deserve to get out of their gates at 5.00 a.m. without a traffic jam, Madam Speaker. One more hour [of] sleep as the Bodden Town West and North Side Members said.

Now, we can disagree on this side but we don't have to be disagreeable. We have to be the Government that makes the hard decisions. The Government of the people. We owe it to them; no one is less [sic] [more] important in this country, Madam Speaker, and if we fail to pass this Motion and act, we are saying that

the eastern district persons are not as important. That's my opinion.

The Attorney General has given his advice and I thank him very much. I respect and honour [him], he is a friend. I hope he calls me a friend.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: However, I want to state something, and when I call a person a friend, in the same sentence I am not so unkind.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'll make an exception. All I want to say Mr. Attorney General is that, section 49 of the [National Conservation] Law, "Directions to the Council by the Cabinet" states, "**The Cabinet may give to the Council in writing such general directions as appear to the Cabinet to be necessary having regard to the provisions of this Law, the Conventions and the public interest and the Council shall act in accordance with such directions.**" Mr. Attorney General, let's investigate further, sir.

Madam Speaker, I don't have to raise my voice because it's quite strong already, but I will raise eyebrows with my actions if this road is not considered.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I want to quote the lyrics of a song and it's on the internet. You can Google this.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: It's not the same song that the Honourable Member for Red Bay said, *a fine time to leave me Lucille*; no leaving today. However, what I want to say is, the song is by a group named Status Quo and it's entitled, *Two Way Traffic*:

**“Work work busy busy bang bang
Twenty five hours a day
Feels like working on a chain gang
I never seem to get away
Money to earn, money to burn
A platinum card for show
Where does it go, how should I know?”**

**And it's two way traffic on a one way street
All the voices in the air are stuck on repeat
It's a two horse race in a one horse town
Like a house of cards it's gonna fall down**

**Foreplay's out, get ready to rumble
Survival of the fittest, the law of the jungle
Fold back, hold back, get yourself a seat**

For two way traffic on a one way street

**Superman, where are you?
We need you to pave the way
Feels like an alien invasion
Trouble coming every day
War of the worlds, you get the girl
It really don't sound that bad
Fighting in the snow, way to go, yeah**

**And it's two way traffic on a one way street
All the voices in the air are stuck on repeat
It's a two horse race in a one horse town
Like a house of cards it's gonna fall down**

**Foreplay's out, get ready to rumble
Survival of the fittest, the law of the jungle
Fold back, hold back, get yourself a seat
For two way traffic on a one way street."**

God bless this is honourable country, this Government, and our decisions. May God give us strength and wisdom to make the decisions that make the lives of our people better in this country, even if sometimes it goes against some of the principles that we believe in. Let us tweak and move forward for time knows no man.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. God bless this country.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause]

The Member for Savannah.

If you happen to have any songs that you are going to be quoting from, perhaps you could sing that for us today.

[Laughter]

Ms. Heather D. Bodden, Elected Member for Savannah: Then they might all run.

[Laughter]

Ms. Heather D. Bodden: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be brief.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support Private Member's Motion No. 8 of 2022-2023. I hereby rise to give this my full support.

Madam Speaker, the same issues as mentioned by the Member for West Bay West are what we hear daily from our people in the Savannah/Newlands area. I know the frustration, Madam Speaker, I feel it and if I'm stuck in traffic, I know exactly what other people are going through. I don't have children in my vehicle, but I am aware of the struggle from people daily. I can only imagine what parents face each day leaving

home with children half-dressed while trying to feed them their breakfast.

Madam Speaker, this is no decent lifestyle for our people. For so many years we have heard the road was going to go through or be built, yet it still sits there waiting for a few machines to begin the job. As previous speakers have said, Madam Speaker, sitting in traffic causes serious stress. Possible effects can include people opting for a job change due to stress and fatigue caused by the daily commute.

Madam Speaker, I can't believe we don't have more road rage than we do. We all need a better quality of life, it needs to be found for our people. Yes, it must be done properly but this is an issue of national importance and needs to be done quickly.

As I said, I fully support the motion Madam Speaker, as I know our people deserve some relief.

I thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I'm nervous. Oh, I am not going to sing; I learnt that lesson a long time ago, almost lost my wife for trying to sing.

Madam Speaker, I am going to try my endeavour best to deal with this as delicately as I possibly can so not to have the Opposition have too many smiles because they're over there so happy right now to see the conflict across the way.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: No, they support the Bill; this is not about the Motion.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I hate to say this but this topic that we are talking about sadly, can be the demise of this Administration.

Madam Speaker, what we are faced with—and I was doing the numbers in the lunch room just now—as far as my recollection so far West Bay North, West Bay West, George Town Central, George Town East, George Town North, George Town South, George Town West, Red Bay, Bodden Town East, Bodden Town West; and now added to the count Savannah, North Side, East End, Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman. That's the count so far in support of this Motion.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: So far based on indications.

An Hon. Member: You *gotta* get to the vote.

An Hon. Member: You can't say that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, maybe I am being to pre-emptive.

Madam Speaker, my point simply is this: excluding yourself, it seems that everybody in this House is in support of this Motion.

Madam Speaker, I am going to suggest that we have heard all the issues, and just for emphasis I'll highlight all the ones that I've recorded so far with respect to the issues that the lack of this road has caused.

We have safety issues by way of emergency service road in the event of any accidents or major disasters. We also heard from the honourable Member for Savannah about the potential for road rage and why she's surprised that we haven't had it already. I agree with her.

Madam Speaker, we also heard about traffic and the potential mental health issues that come along with it from the major studies across the world. We have also heard Members highlight the physical health concerns from being in traffic for too long, you can even get *urinary tract infections*.

Obviously we have heard about the effects on the quality of life due to families unable to spend time with their loved ones with the loss of up to 2-3 hours per day, being about 15 hours per week. We also heard about how that loss of hours causes much loss in economic productivity for our country. We also know that being in traffic for those many hours adds more emissions to the environment; that the lack of this road hinders the economic diversification of this country and causes us to be in traffic longer which increases costs particularly for those in the eastern districts because the longer you're in your vehicle, the more fuel you burn and the more fuel you burn, the more it costs.

Madam Speaker, one particular area of concern for me is the Cayman brand damage. I have to say to this honourable House that traffic has come up on numerous occasions as a negative talking point for the country in relation to tourism and investor confidence. However, I am certain that if we ask the public today, you would have a lot more people to add to that long list of the problems that this road is causing.

I want to go back to what I started with, Madam Speaker. It is assumed that all Members of this House will support [this Motion] and we have to wait to the vote. Madam Speaker, if every Member of this House is in support of the body of this Motion, the question is what will happen after this?

Madam Speaker, I recall being burnt by motions because I was in Opposition where [there's a] game of, *let's accept a motion* so the public can see that we are in support of something when there is no real support.

Madam Speaker, I think based on the conversations you have heard from the Members of this House, there is a serious issue of trust and commitment to follow through. I didn't say by whom or which entity but we no longer can hide from that fact that there seems to be some sort of invisible hindrance in the way of resolving this much needed road in a timely manner.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am going to get into the legality of what we can do as per this Motion shortly, but I want to take us back to something very recent that we all are fully aware of and that is in relation to the COVID vaccine.

You see, Madam Speaker, I see the COVID vaccine as a prime example to this road development. When the world needed a solution to an emergency—something that normally takes 10 years to accomplish by way of vaccine—the scientists decided to say, if you get all the brightest minds in the room at one time and you add all the research together, they can justify having a vaccine that is acceptable by the medical fraternity within a shorter period.

Now, Madam Speaker, I used that as an example here with the EIA. There are two things going on here: one, we all believe the road needs to be done and we all want to protect the environment and I am of the same thinking. However, the question is, why can't we, if it takes a normal Environmental Impact Assessment?

Remember I said, Madam Speaker, this is all about timing. The people want to know how much longer they have to wait. Are we going to wait for somebody to die? Are we going to wait until a child gets in trouble where a parent is not around at the end of the day after work? What are we waiting on? I say, what are we waiting on, because I know that we [could] have at our disposal if we wanted to 15, 50 or 100 environmentalists who do the EIA all working down here at the same time to get it done quicker. Well, let's get that done because you know why, it's a national priority.

Madam Speaker, I don't know about you, but I am a Member of the Government and I still can't get a firm date on when this EIA is going to be finished.

Madam Speaker, I hate to do this because it's not always politically smart—they'll will use it against you later on—but I have to agree with the former Premier of this country.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Nothing wrong with that.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Is there true commitment to this or not?

Madam Speaker, the Motion speaks to the word "considers" and that word haunts me to the bone because they say, *see one apple here, look at it and consider it, but don't bite it*. That's what it says; and I am not going to allow this issue of national importance to just get the mark of consideration then it goes on the shelf like my motion about pension withdrawal, that the last Administration agreed to because they didn't want to make it look bad in the public domain that they

weren't willing to help the people, and it goes on a shelf. That's not going to happen with this Motion, Madam Speaker.

Therefore, there needs to be some action with this. Now, Madam Speaker, one thing I don't think any of us want to do is break the Law.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: We're going to get there.

None of us want to break the Law. Madam Speaker, the big controversy here is, can the Cabinet, the Government, direct the National Conservation Council as to what this Motion is requesting. That's what this boils down to because I can't rightfully ask or expect any Member [to] and I know the Opposition themselves wouldn't want us to break the law. Thus, we have to examine that notion.

I heard my Honourable colleagues in Cabinet and in Caucus speak to the National Conservation Law and I refer to it. Madam Speaker, I don't have a copy but if you need a copy of it, I've asked the Clerk of Parliament to bring it for you, but it is section 48 [sic] [49]. If you don't mind me reading from my phone with your permission. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know that the Honourable Minister for Labour highlighted it but I think it's worth repeating. It says in section 49, "**The Cabinet may give to the Council in writing such general directions as appear to the Cabinet to be necessary having regard to the provisions of this Law, the Conventions and the public interest and the Council shall act** [again, *shall* in legal terms means you must] **in accordance with such directions.**"

Madam Speaker, we discussed that, we have asked for advice and the determination was, though you must follow those directions, those directions can only be general in nature. Therefore, this Motion being very specific in its nature, the Cabinet will not be able to do so. That's where we came to; that's the boiling point.

Madam Speaker, it then boils down to the other question. If this country's elected arm by way of majority, which is the voice of the majority of these people in this country said, they want something through their representatives and they don't have the power to do it but the Council has the power to override the people's voice, we have a problem.

Excuse me, Madam Speaker, could you give me two seconds?

[Pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker for your indulgence.

Madam Speaker, I go back now to the legality of where we are because if this went to referendum today, based on the support that I recognise, based on the voices of the people of this country, the people of

North Side want the road done now; the people of East End, Northward, Lookout Gardens, Savannah, Newlands, and Prospect want the road done now. Even West Bay that the good member for West Bay West created that beautiful road through, even they want it done and they aren't affected by it. I want to say to the good members of George Town though we're sometimes on the opposite side, we respect the other districts.

Madam Speaker, we are talking about traffic and the negative effects of it in particular to this one road. I will talk a little bit later in my speech about general traffic because I had to ask one question that I heard a very smart Caymanian say [sic] [ask]. I was away for work at a conference and I asked the Council Leader to please allow me to not come to dinner because this meeting was so important and I streamed it live and I listened to it. The young man said, he was just like me, Madam Speaker, stuck between a rock and a hard place; of the new generation wanting to protect the environment but wants to solve the problem. So, he said, how can we ensure that traffic does not continue if we build the road?

Madam Speaker, he has a right to ask that question and I'll tell you why. The National Development Plan is non-existent at this point. The National Development Plan would have things like the diversification of much of our working locations.

Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the good Minister of roads highlighted this, but the big problem why we have so much traffic is, over 65 per cent of our population lives in Bodden Town, North Side and East End.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: A substantial number of people live—

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Deputy Speaker: 18.5 thousand.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, good Member.

A substantial number lives to the East and every one of them has to come to the West because 90 per cent of the jobs in this country are on the western side of the Island.

Madam Speaker, you may have heard me say publicly on the radio that one of the key solutions to traffic in this country when I was the Minister for Public Transport—public bus transportation not transport in its totality—is that what we need to try to do is move some of the working facilities outside of the western side. Now, how can we convince the likes of a Walkers, Ernst & Young or a Flowers Group or any company like that to develop to the East so we can stop having so many people drive from the East to the West? You could only do that if you have a decent road service because, Madam Speaker, at this moment we're using what you call a community road to service this whole country.

Now, that community road was all right when we were in any year before 2000, but when we became a modern society, we needed modern roadways. I want to send a big shout out to Mr. Arden McLean who tried to do that but he got a lot of pushback, quite similar to what we're getting now with respect to the Ironwood Forest. However, I am happy to know that the good Minister of roads has had good discussions with those who want to protect the Ironwood Forest, like myself, and found out ways to go around it. There are solutions coming to that and I won't say anymore and allow him to make his own public utterances.

However, Madam Speaker, without this roadway and infrastructure to the East, we will continue to see applications for working environments to the West. This young man was right to ask the question, if we don't have the other things that go along with the traffic reduction strategies outside the road, the traffic will continue because the people are still going to get on it and come straight down to the western side of the Island. Thus, this approach can't be done by itself but I must say in order to start the ball rolling, it has to be the first domino to fall and the longer we wait for it to fall the longer it takes for us to solve the problem.

Madam Speaker, we are politicians in this honourable House and I have a good idea having gone through three elections so far and seeing examples of when people are not happy with you and they don't think—especially when you're on the government side. *You were there, you were in charge. What do you mean you couldn't get it done? You think that the voters are going to say, oh, he couldn't convince his colleague? We are under pressure by our constituents who say, listen, I put you there. What are you doing? You mean to tell me unna in power and unna can't get the road complete?* They don't understand or care about the National Conservation Council. They want to be home with their children.

You see, Madam Speaker, some people have different priorities. Some people being home at 7 o'clock is not a priority because maybe they don't have kids or they can afford to stay on the western side of the Island during the day or until night-time because that's the affordability of their life.

Madam Speaker, again, I say, if we were to put this to the referendum tomorrow morning, I can promise you that the people would say, *I don't care what the National Conservation Council says, the road needs to get started tomorrow morning.* I think it would get at least 70 per cent of the vote in favour for the road to start tomorrow morning. I'll tell you what, I know the listening public is hearing this debate today and I encourage each and every one of you to call every radio station you have, call every representative you have and tell the Government you want the road done *now!* You also know the National Conservation Council members, tell them you want the road done now! If this Government doesn't understand that after you voice your opinion, you know what you *gotta* do.

Madam Speaker, if we are willing to accept this Motion, that must mean that we are all willing to accept changes to the National Conservation Act, 2013, to give the Government of the day the power to instruct direct immediate action.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: *Coming to a Parliament near you, my colleague says.*

Madam Speaker, what I am trying to accomplish here is I don't want any shenanigans with this Motion. We play too much shenanigans in this House and its new, young Members here now and we don't want the shenanigans. It's either going to get the support by the majority through the democratic process of the Members of this Parliament and it's going to be done and you do what it takes to get it done or you don't support it, simply put.

By looking and examining this, what this is asking you to do is, as a government in power, to give directives and if you do not believe that power is within the Law, that must mean you're saying you're coming to Parliament to change the Law to allow the Government of the day to have the power to give the direction.

When it's time for a division—because we're going to have a division today—who supports this, remember what we are concluding because Madam Speaker, we're playing too many political games with the people's lives. Two years and 13 days we knew the traffic problem when we took the Government. As soon as we opened up from lockdown everybody said, *oh, traffic is back again.*

I am going to tell you this, Madam Speaker, I stand here as a witness today, the Honourable Minister in charge of roads some days I had to say, *bro calm down, you know we got to deal with this but we got to do it in the right way.* How many times—I don't know what else is left for him to do. He did it in a calm way, an aggressive way, he shouted and screamed, he wrote emails, he brought presentations, he asked for discussions with every single stakeholder group. I don't know what is left for the Minister for roads to do to get this road done.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Bulldoze it myself.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: That's the only thing that is left, it's for him to go and bulldoze it himself but I wouldn't advise him to do that because I know that's what they want him to do, to go too far so they can use it against him. But no, no, no, this generation of leaders can figure this out and we're going to pressure today to make sure you either *poop or get off the pot.* That's how this is going to work.

Madam Speaker, this debate is going to be all about the legality of this Motion. Again, I say for the listening audience—I know I'm going to pick up licks for this because I can see the comments now and I haven't

gotten to the environmental stuff and I will get there shortly—but this is about the legality of whether the people's voices by majority have power in this country. Because you know there are plenty of questions about the law and when it was passed and whether it was truly understood by the government of the day so let's not—

Member for Red Bay you are going to say something?

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: I got that story.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: You got that story... alright. It sounds like there's going to be some contribution from the Member for Red Bay so the country's really going to fully understand what is transpiring here because we're going to stop playing games with the people.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: In writing, okay. I leave you to that; that is above my pay scale. So we're going to get down to the legalities of what this Motion is talking about.

Madam Speaker, there are also benefits to what this road can do. Now, I know that the loudest voices out there right now are those who want to stop it—coming from a good place—those who I see pushing against it are not pushing against it, in my humble opinion, from a negative place but because of the lack of understanding of the balance that can be struck from an environmental perspective.

Remember we were talking just yesterday in my contribution about the definition of sustainability. Sustainability is only being discussed about the environment, not about the social and economic impact on the people. The economic impact has a social effect because if you don't have a proper economy where you can get a job to feed your children, then you're going to have a social problem.

Yes, we are surely adequate from an environmental perspective and the concerns, the topics and visions, and the promotions; and I swear we passed more environmental pieces of regulation and legislation so far in this Government than any other government so far in a short period of time. However, it is time now to talk about the people.

This road is not only about traffic, Madam Speaker, if we genuinely want to hit the things that the people are concerned about like housing and ownership of their country—you remember me speaking last night about the supply and demand equation and what opening up this road can do. Let me be clear this time: I am not talking about the wetlands area because the road—

Minister, forgive me, I need you because I need some information. How long is the road from Newlands to Frank Sound?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Less than 12 miles.

Now, Madam Speaker, of that 12 miles yes, there may be a mile or two or possibly three that is wetlands that it is designed to go through. I agree with those out there who love and protect the environment and I support your efforts and I expect you to continue to do that because we are not going to try to develop the wetlands.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Three miles of it is wetlands, I just heard confirmed. That means there are nine miles of arable land where we can get to help give more supply on the market for Caymanians to be able to afford a piece of property; because again, like I said last night, if you add more supply to the equation, the price and cost must go down.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Nine miles of hope.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Nine miles of hope—I like it—to change the opportunities for good quality of life for our people, to reduce the travel time as well as to give them opportunities to get a piece of property and potentially build a house within their costs range; because the prices will go down, Madam Speaker, once you add supply to it.

Madam Speaker, what it also does is allows us to not put any more pressure on the western side of the Island. You know why everyone builds over here? Think about a business person and think about the things that they decide before they do a development. You think the people who want to make money in this country wouldn't build east if it wasn't beneficial? You know why they don't build east, because they recognise that their business equation and research tells them that the connectivity to the eastern side of the Island is not sufficient, therefore they wouldn't have the profits that they need to make money. That's why they don't do it.

You don't think the likes of the Flowers Group or the Dart family or—bad example because I know they're going to say, *oh my God, he said Dart*. I should never have said that; I am going to pay for that one. Anyhow, let's talk about the Caymanian families: the Thompson's, the Kirkconnell's, the Flowers Group—give me some other Caymanian developers.

An Hon. Member: Davenport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Davenport Caymanian?

Any Caymanian who has money in their pocket to say, we see the future of this country and we see opportunities—Bobby Bodden. They haven't developed that way because they see there is no benefit.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to say one thing, at least the discussion within our Government has started, with respect to any future government development.

Madam Speaker, you know that there was supposed to be a second government building? Currently we are renting space that would equate to over 1.5 times the size of the government building due to the fact that we haven't built our second government building. Madam Speaker, I dare say that this is a perfect opportunity to plan properly with this road to start to move and build a new city, a new town to the eastern side. As a matter of fact, maybe we should consider no more building to the West, *period*. All you're doing is compounding the problem. We need to stop people from coming this direction if you want to stop traffic.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I hear my good colleagues from Cayman Brac suggesting to let them work in Cayman Brac but flying back home in the day—I don't think Cayman Airways can afford that one.

Madam Speaker, the EIA is just not being done fast enough. I don't think I've heard one Member say they are not in support of the EIA but I am waiting for somebody to tell me that my suggestion just now of, if you need to pay three times the amount of the price to get more specialists here to get the ball rolling quicker, cannot be done.

Madam Speaker, I still haven't heard the justification for why the whole EIA has to be done in one go as opposed to in phases. You see, Madam Speaker, there is a commonality here that I am getting at. I can only tell you about how I feel and I am happy if somebody can show me differently, prove me wrong, tell me that my feelings about this matter are incorrect because everything that I am hearing and seeing seems to be another hurdle, another answer, another excuse. There is no, *yes, we are going to figure it out, yes, we are going to do it faster*. It is always no, no, no. You know what the people going to tell the politicians come election? They're going to say no, no, no.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I know that this conversation and this debate today will be discussed heavily tomorrow morning and for the rest of this weekend, but it has to be said. I know for myself and many other Members on this side when it comes to this one issue, we are not allowed to play anymore games, we're fed up with it, simply just fed up. Anybody with any political acumen, knowledge or experience would say what's going on, what's happening with the Government; one Member is saying this, one Member saying that. Yeah, that's right because Members on this side have had enough and we want the road done and we want it done now. I am also glad to hear, Madam

Speaker, that the Opposition Members all agree with that position.

Madam Speaker, you know the reason why I can't even invest heavily in the eastern districts as much as I want to with tourism—the good former Minister I am certain has heard this before. The reason why we can't do as much investments to the east is because of the traffic time and the speed to get people to those beautiful attractions in the eastern districts. With the traffic, by the time you get them there and back to the boat, half of the day is gone. Then I'm expected as the Minister to diversify the tourism product. How can I do that if we don't have a good road system? Would you agree former Minister?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you so much Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman. We can't even get the money to the East Enders, the North Siders and the Bodden Towners; and I'm trying my hardest. I want to almost pick it up and carry it to them and they got it locked down because they won't do the road. You know why we wait around and delay this road? You know what's happening? I said it last night and I'll give a warning again, the foreclosure is coming because the interest rates haven't gone down. How can you afford to have an increase of 10 per cent in costs unless you got a new job, a new hire or upgrade, unless you made some serious sacrifices; there are going to be many Caymanians who are going to be in trouble. Seven interest rate hikes and we're trying to get the money to them and can't get it to them.

Madam Speaker, if we are going to talk about the National Development Plan, we have to talk about the East-West Arterial and the speed with which it is done. Some people out there don't want it to be done at all. I don't know how you can have a National Development Plan without the East-West Arterial. You know what I am most fearful of, Madam Speaker, is that we are allowing some to get in the way of this road because—and I am going to go out on a limb here but somebody has to say it, I've always been a sacrificial lamb—there are some extremists environmentalists out there and they are usually the ones with the loudest voice.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: What I am worried about with that is the average person cares about the environment very much, that's our nature as Caymanians. We love our environment but we want to live, eat and survive at the same time. What is happening is, when people sit and see that they are getting nowhere and getting frustrated and all they hear is no, no, no; and they're hearing it from the extremist environmentalist you know what you're going to have? You're going to have the opposite extremism pushback and those people who

are affected in a negative way, they're going to say, *I don't care. I don't give no cahoots with the environment anymore. I want the road done.* That's when we're going to get in trouble because that's when the whole thought process of the environment is going to go out the window rather than having a balanced approach to this.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yes, preach.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: When somebody can't feed their children because they can't get to work or they can't get home to cook you think you're going to be able to tell them about any wetlands?

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: *Talk yuh talk.*

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Come on man.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: This goes back to the state of nature, Madam Speaker, the priority of survival of life. You want to protect the environment? Make sure everybody who lives in the environment has good reason to put that priority on the top of their list. When they're hungry and can't eat, when crime or education or these other things are problems, the environment becomes the lower part of the issue. You can't force it down their throat.

You want to help the environment, help a young Caymanian who doesn't have a job. When they are making enough money to care and put the environment at the top of their priority list because food is not a problem, mortgage is not a problem, kids are not a problem, my health is not a problem; when you solve the other problems then that jumps to the top. That's how you fix the environment.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Give them something to smile about.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: However, Madam Speaker, we don't want to talk about that, we think that we can force this down their throats.

I am going to tell you this today, the National Conservation Council, you need to re-evaluate how you're approaching the vision and the plan you have to protect the environment because you're going to create a generation of extremists who are going to come and say, *I am going to get rid of the law and tear it up altogether.* You see how passionate I have delivered? You see how passionate the Ministers have? These are the new Members of the future and we're frustrated because you don't want to give our people freedom. You don't want to give our people sleep and you're not clear

about the information either. It seems to be tricks and games.

You tell me now why my Premier hasn't gotten up yet. Come on man.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I was hoping I wouldn't have to get up. I want to hear because let's be serious about this, he is the Minister for Sustainability. This issue is an emotive one for many of us on this side. Obviously, some of us don't feel confident about this topic; if we felt confident enough, we wouldn't be speaking like this.

You realise if I didn't get up just now, you would have moved back to the Speaker to close? You know what that would have meant Madam Speaker? That means the Opposition would have said, *you imagine not even a word from the leader.* That's the reality.

Now, people may not like the fact that I said that but that's the truth. This is not a joke. The road is essential to the people's lives. Now, if I had to pay the penalty for saying that, well, so be it. We have to deal with this matter because you know what, even investment is suffering as a result of it. People don't know what's going on. They are talking about a slowdown in applications. Ask the Minister if there has been a slowdown in the applications; maybe that's what they want. I don't know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: People are worried. They say, *is the National Conservation Council going to be in full charge or is it the elected voice of the people?* I always thought—maybe I'm fool. I don't know—that we were the voice of the power in this country, the people. However, it doesn't seem that way when it comes to this issue. Madam Speaker, I am going to stop there but I'll say this together, PACT United, PACT United.

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

The Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, Ready, Fire, Aim! That is what we have been doing in this country. We have failed to plan and failed to address the issues that are now affecting the people in this country. I don't blame any of my colleagues for being upset. What bothers me is they think that I am not equally committed to addressing the interests of the people of this country. They might love this country as much as I do, but they don't love it any more than I do. They might love their people, our people as much as I do but no more.

Madam Speaker, I want to paint a picture of what has transpired with this East-West Arterial road from the time it was first planned. I'm going to go back to 16th March, 2005. Madam Speaker, I am happy to give you a copy of this but this is just a summary of dates and events that transpired in relation to the East-West Arterial.

Madam Speaker, 16th March, 2005, the Department of Environment wrote to the Managing Director of the National Roads Authority saying that in connection with this planned extension of the road, an Environmental Impact Assessment should be applied. Madam Speaker, what they specifically said was that this would represent an information gathering and rationalisation phase during which all alternate options could be objectively identified and evaluated. I am not going to go into much more than that but that's 2005 Madam Speaker. Between 2006 and 2014 there were some discussions about doing the road with a company called Eagle Assets Investments. Madam Speaker, it didn't move forward in that period.

Madam Speaker, 3rd March, 2014, the then Premier held a press conference where he said the \$40 million, 10-mile highway extension would go through a rigorous Environmental Impact Assessment before being given the final go ahead. Public record, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, I supported that. I was the Minister for the Environment at the time. I was requesting that we move ahead with an Environmental Impact Assessment. Madam Speaker, 29th December, 2014, the then PLAH Minister (Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure) writes to the Department of Environment and asked for assistance with the terms of reference. The 13th January, 2015, the Department of Environment wrote back with advice and asked for some additional information. The next correspondence, Madam Speaker, is the 28th April, 2016. One year and three months passed with nothing being done.

Madam Speaker, I remember having to drive through the traffic then. I have always lived in Newlands from the time I was four or five years old, so I know what it's like, Madam Speaker. I knew what it was like when we used to have to drive out to "tall tree" and make the right turn and come down to Town along the coast road. I knew the difference it made having the bypass as we call it, coming down. However, we all know where the chokepoints are as well because as it is now, I come down and I run into the traffic before I get to the Tomlinson roundabout.

Madam Speaker, I am telling this honourable House, the members of the public listening, and my colleagues so that they have an idea of what has transpired, in terms of the history of this project.

Madam Speaker, 20th April, 2016, that Planning Ministry wrote back saying they do not want to do an Environmental Impact Assessment. They said they knew what they were doing, it was never required before and it didn't need to be done.

Madam Speaker, on the 2nd May, 2016, the Department of Environment responds saying an EIA is required and should be carried out. On the 29th June, 2016, an EIA directive is gazetted; on 20th September, 2016, the Ministry again wrote to say they don't want to do an EIA.

Madam Speaker, any developed country, any country that is in our region that you want to point to, almost every one of them requires an EIA; anyone with a developed system of planning. You can't do a road in Jamaica without having an EIA done. You can't do a road in Bermuda or Belize without having an EIA done. Madam Speaker, at least some thing that when the road is built and becomes a fixed structure, you don't have to worry about what the impacts are because you have worked it out, have assessed what they are, and you have managed either the environmental impacts or the impacts on society or noise or whatever it is.

Madam Speaker, an Environmental Impact Assessment may mislead you by the name to believe that it is just about the environment. That is not the case, Madam Speaker. If you look at the now published Terms of Reference for the Environmental Impact Assessment for the East-West extension as proposed, which was published a couple of weeks ago, you will see that it's far more than just about the environment. It is working out impacts on the environment and how to mitigate it; impacts on flooding and stormwater management; noise impacts on adjacent environments; and impacts on the ability of other local traffic patterns to operate.

Madam Speaker, I am going to skip down to 15th March, 2017. The Ministry of Planning wrote to say they now wish to do an EIA; 2017, Madam Speaker. The Department of Environment wrote back to request information, including a plan for them to be able to prepare the Environmental Impact Scoping Opinion to tell them what they needed to do. One year and five months passed with no interaction, no discussion.

Madam Speaker, from 4th April, 2017, one year and five months passed by, yet, Madam Speaker, our people in the eastern districts of this Island have been suffering traffic problems from then. There was no straight driving. You know what we experience today when schools are out and it's an easy driving generally? We had the same issue back then. We would look forward to the day that the schools were out so that you would have an easier drive to work.

Madam Speaker, 24th September, 2019, the Ministry then comes back to say, we don't want to do an EIA again. Madam Speaker, specifically the language was, *while we do not wish to undertake an EIA for this section, we wish to be as sensitive to the environment as possible*. Back and forth, the same

problems our people have all this time been suffering traffic issues.

Madam Speaker, 7th October, 2019, the National Conservation Council considered the request and decides that an EIA should be undertaken from the Woodland Drive east area. From that point forward, they have been consistent with where the EIA should be done.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry came back and said, well, okay, we'll do the Woodland Drive to Harvey Stephenson connector. Madam Speaker, I am giving these dates just to say that these issues have been ongoing. Six months passed and there is no reaction or response. Nine months passed, there is no reaction or response. Madam Speaker, I fully accept that this Government should have been able to move faster. When I say this Government, I am not talking about my colleagues. I am talking about the mechanisms that surround the agencies that are supposed to get this stuff done because we don't go and sit in the office, the Minister doesn't go and sit in the office Madam Speaker, to get it done. If there is a commitment to do an Environmental Impact Assessment, the staff are supposed to be doing it, not the Minister.

Madam Speaker, this has been a source of frustration for all of us who live in the eastern districts. It's been a personal source of frustration for me because I have to then put up with suggestions despite the fact that the Environmental Impact Advisory Board has been engaging and trying to get a response and getting flip-flopping answers from certain members of staff in the Ministry at different points. Not the Minister but members of staff.

Madam Speaker, how do we serve the interests of our people by not making a decision, taking a matter forward once a decision is made at the policy level, and get it done.

Madam Speaker, five months passed between May and October of 2022 and the NRA didn't engage. I have said in this House before that I saw these issues coming, we've had traffic for ages but I saw these issues coming. I also said to the Department of Environment and people on the National Conservation Council, *make sure you engage, make sure you do what you have to do to assist because this needs to get done*. I have said before in this honourable House that I supported this road getting done but I support it getting done in the right way, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, other Members have referred to the terms of the National Conservation Act as it is now, and the provision in section 49 which refers to the ability for Cabinet to issue general directions. Madam Speaker, there is no other agency that government gives the authority to make decisions, where it retains the authority to say, *I don't like the decision you made. I am going to make that decision for you. I am going to give you a directive to do that very thing that I gave you the authority to make a decision in relation to*.

This is why, Madam Speaker, our system doesn't work as well as it should because once a decision is made, once the government is saying we support an EIA being done on this, we want this to move forward as quickly as possible, why isn't it done? Why do we have these failures and these long gaps over years where nothing is done, Madam Speaker? Then the people of our districts, our constituents rightly—as Members have noted—look at us and say, *what are you doing? Have you done anything for us?* Then we say, look, we are the policy makers we asked for this to be done. Unless somebody can tell me that there's someone else saying don't do it, which I am not aware of—and when I say don't do it, I know it's not the National Conservation [Council] because I have gone to them numerous times about this issue; not to tell them what to do but to tell them, make sure you engage.

You see what I read out here, Madam Speaker, these long periods from all the way back in 2005 where there's been all this flip-flopping; and one year three months passed with no interaction, one year five months passed with no interaction, six months passed with no interaction, nine months passed with no interaction. Madam Speaker, that's a recipe for disaster.

I went to the National Conservation Council, I spoke to members and I said, please make sure you engage with the agencies that are required to be doing this because they will transfer their failure to you. We need to get this moved forward and done.

Madam Speaker, I support this road. My colleagues know that I support the road despite comments you may have heard suggesting there's some unseen hand—must be like the hand of God in that Maradona football game where he scored the goal without kicking the ball. None of that is happening, Madam Speaker, none of that is happening. What is happening, is we have people who are not engaging to get this done.

Madam Speaker, 2005... well, let me just start from 2014 or 2016 when the scoping opinion was issued to confirm an Environmental Impact Assessment would be required. That's seven years ago, Madam Speaker, you know how many EIAs you can do in seven years?

Madam Speaker, this should have been done. That is how we serve the interest of our people, to act with pace, act efficiently and deal with the matters to be able to deliver for them so that people don't have to get exercised to this point where they feel like something is happening and things aren't going forward.

I am saying, they are looking in the wrong direction, Madam Speaker. I heard my colleague talking about what happens with the environment when people feel like they don't have the ability to live. That's fair enough, Madam Speaker, but the environment is much more fundamental than that because without the environment, without green, we are not here either; we don't live. Nature does not need us, we need nature. However, this is not about some plan or some scheme to prevent a road from happening, to prevent the work

from being done, to get to move the road along, Madam Speaker. That's not what it's about.

Madam Speaker, I do want to say that I think my colleague who spoke earlier in terms of the EIA that is being carried out in relation to the ISWMS Project, I think there is a misunderstanding, Madam Speaker, because what is happening with the Environmental Impact Assessment for the ReGen project is a normal process. It is just that when you go through the normal process and the work is being done, at the end of it they submit like a 25 chapter book/work product which sets out what is being done, what has been done, what assessments have been made, what were the results? Then they work on the potential steps to mitigate those impacts, whether they be environmental or issues which impact the lives of people; whether its flood control measures or noise control measures, Madam Speaker.

It has a broad range but that book, once it gets submitted, normally then gets reviewed and then gets submitted as a draft environmental impact statement which then goes out to public consultation. In the case of the ISWMS Project, Madam Speaker, I think the misunderstanding comes about because what was agreed was that instead of waiting for the 25 chapters to come in one time, they are considering two or three or four chapters as they move along. It's not speeding up the EIA process in terms of the work to be done but they are considering chapters as they move along in order to assist in getting the right results, the right kind of work product without having the review to be done at the end of the period with the 25 chapter book which says, *oh chapters five, six and eight have deficiencies there that you need to go and address*. That's what that is about, Madam Speaker.

I say that Madam Speaker, simply to note that this is not a question of changing the rules, of taking different standards, and it is not a question of favouring one type of project over another type of project. Madam Speaker, the same approach could be taken with the Environmental Impact Assessment for the East-West [Arterial].

Now, the "considered" part of the Motion is whether the EIA could start from Lookout [Gardens] to go east. Madam Speaker, we have had these discussions about it within Government and I've had those same discussions with members of the NCC to say, is this something that is viable? Is this something that could be considered? They have indicated to me in the past—and I can't tell you what they might say to me a week from now—that they still think that the conclusions that they came to originally with the original scoping opinion, remain valid. They are expressing frustration to me, Madam Speaker, that things aren't moving along as fast as they should. As I said to you, I have said to them, please continue to push, continue to engage, don't wait.

Madam Speaker, we have all kinds of processes. We serve the people of this country in all kinds

of applications and ways. Sometimes you see an application come to you with a Cabinet Paper proposal and it was started 8, 10 or 12 months ago. I'd ask, what's the reason for this delay? Why has this taken this period of time? Sometimes, Madam Speaker, you get the answer you don't want which is, *well, they sent this in and it wasn't complete and I asked them to provide this information so they didn't get back to me for six months*. I'd say, well, you know what happens when you don't get back to them for six months and follow up? They say it's your fault.

Madam Speaker, we, I think, in government—just as you have to do in the private sector when you are serving customers and building a reputation of service and delivery—have to be proactive. You have to go back and say, *hey haven't heard from you, let's follow-up on this*. I am not suggesting that they were not being proactive, they were being proactive at times, but there are periods here where I think they should have been a follow-up. There should have been a request so one year and three months shouldn't have passed by with no communication in relation to the EIA on this road in 2015; one year and five months in 2017, et cetera. None of this should have happened. The agencies should have been proactive, both parties; and I've come along and I am encouraging my side of the equation to make sure that they engage, follow-up, and provide as much assistance as they can because as I said earlier, even with the people who apply for other things, other licenses and whatnot, it's human nature. They don't get it until a year later, there is very little thought about *well, actually eight months of that I didn't respond*. It is the agency that has to deal with it that gets blamed for it, Madam Speaker.

Thus, there is a little bit of blame to go around but since coming into Office, we have been committed to trying to get this moved forward, Madam Speaker. I have been personally engaged in pushing this matter from last year; in fact, since the end of '21. I think Madam Speaker, that's why we finally got to the point now where we have a published set of Terms of Reference for the EIA.

Madam Speaker, we have to support the needs of our people. Of course, we have to be responsible as well. We have to make sure that we are not doing something which is going to provide either irreversible impacts on the quality of their life, the value of their property, their ability to utilise it or ones that are going to cost a lot of money to rectify.

Madam Speaker, the US Army Corps of Engineers in the '50s did a lot of work draining, putting in canals, crisscrossing the state of Florida—which as we all know is a peninsula probably 900 miles long or more. They did a lot of work cutting all these canals connecting to lakes, putting in additional drainage lakes in order to drain the water off the land, so that big sugar companies that bought or leased this land and were able to grow sugarcane made a lot of money doing it.

Then there were the scientists and marine biologists wondering what's happening with Florida Bay? Why are all of the seagrass areas in Florida Bay dying off? Why is this important nursery for millions, probably billions, of species that inhabit the area that go down to the Florida Keys, that provide all of the fish, the environment that all the tourists go down to the Keys to enjoy, that all the people who live in the Keys enjoy from a quality of life perspective are dying off? The seagrass was dying off. They knew that without that healthy seagrass, they were in big trouble; the state was in big trouble.

Madam Speaker, the state of Florida has probably spent in excess of \$2 billion since they realised that. Undoing all of the work that had been done by the US Army Corps of Engineers to drain all the water off. They had to find ways to restore the Everglades, to restore the natural flow of water that went from North to South and then eventually flowed out into Florida Bay and provided this flow of freshwater that helped to flush the grass beds and keep them healthy; helped to continue to support those grass beds where manatees are born and feed, where millions or billions of juvenile species utilise as a marine nursery, which the entire state and the entire length of the Keys benefit from. That's just an example of how you can do things without having an idea of the long term impacts and then when you realise what those long term impacts are and you realise how undesirable they are and how desirable it is to fix it, then you are confronted with the situation with the kind of price tag you have to pay in order to resolve it.

Madam Speaker, I don't want our children being raised in cars either. I don't know if it's going to be an extra hour of sleep but Madam Speaker, I am sure it's an appealing idea. Whatever it is 15, 20 minutes, that will help, that'll make a big difference. You know, if you drive for an hour normally and you suddenly find that your drive is 45 minutes you're going to notice. That's a very appreciable difference.

Madam Speaker, I am happy to engage further, to push more than I have, to help as much as we need to, to ensure that we get a reasonable solution to this issue so that the people of the constituencies of Bodden Town East and Bodden Town West can get immediate relief but then the people from North Side and East End can as well, not by a direct route, perhaps at that point, but they will be able to benefit.

Madam Speaker, there is another important question and I know Members have heard me discussing this. I have discussed this in this honourable House, on the radio, at public meetings and in private meetings. Madam Speaker, even if we had approval tomorrow to build the road, it would still be probably close to a year if not more before it's built. However, the issues that our people are facing today, they faced them yesterday, they faced them three years ago, five years ago too; so, there's a lot of blame and a lot of failure to go around, Madam Speaker.

However, we have to make sure we address it now. How do we provide some relief to what they are feeling? Do we say, *listen, hold on, suffer for another year, 14 months or whatever it takes to get [it]*? Is that what we're going to tell them? No, Madam Speaker, we have to provide some interim solutions to address what our people have been feeling.

Madam Speaker, I hear yawning across the way and I don't know who it is, but I am only saying, they had the opportunity to do it three years ago, four years ago, five years ago. I know before that I was a part of the government too. People who were my colleagues on the other side, I don't think could ever say that I wasn't pushing and saying this needed to get done; that the EIA needed to be done so that we can move this along and not have this situation where seven years after the scoping opinion was issued to confirm that an EIA would be required, we still don't have not even one EIA done, because of the failure to engage and push it along.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to impugn anybody's motives, I don't want to unduly criticise anybody but when we have a situation like this, we have to do better. We have to, Madam Speaker. It's not a good reflection on the mechanisms, the agencies and us, the people who are put here by our voters who asked us to stand up for them, to advocate for them, to help make sure that the policies and solutions are provided to address their concerns.

Madam Speaker, this issue, it is not the kind of issue that some people may perceive in that there is some kind of hidden agenda. Yeah, are there people out there who don't want the road built? Absolutely. You can't find one single issue that this country deals with or this Parliament deals with where everybody to a person says, *yeah we're behind you 100 per cent*. You're not going to find that.

There are concerns that this is going to have too much of an environmental impact. Madam Speaker, I have been on record where I have said, when you're looking east on that road, my concern is to the left; the central mangrove wetland. My concerns to the right and to the south are that they do things properly; do a better job with planning; a better job with stormwater management; a better job with making communities more liveable than we have done in the past. That's what I am concerned about, Madam Speaker.

We have a housing task force which is going to roll out a number of initiatives very shortly, which will talk about these kinds of issues, Madam Speaker, and we will be putting initiatives in place. We will be supporting it with legislative changes where necessary because it's a part of the solution for our people to be able to get access to housing, to get on the property ladder, get on the homeownership ladder, that helps to define us as successful people, as good middle-class families that are working their way towards a better life for themselves and their children.

Madam Speaker, enough of the ready, fire, aim; enough of that. This country and our people are tired of failures that are only coming to bear impact on them in greater and greater ways today because we have not been doing what we should. We have been kicking the can down the road; kick it with the left, kick it with the right. Let's see how far we can kick it.

Madam Speaker—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, we have to do better and we will do better. However, the answer isn't just listening to somebody else and saying okay, let's go and argue about why we shouldn't do this and shouldn't do that. Let's work it out together. Let's get everybody around the table and say, okay, how can we speed this up? How can we resolve this issue? How can we move this forward? How can we deliver faster and better for our people?

Madam Speaker, it doesn't matter to me whether I'm here or not. I want to leave a mark where people can say a difference was made for the people of the country; not somebody who constantly kicked the can down the road, not somebody who was afraid to face challenges, not somebody who was afraid to make hard decisions, because I am not afraid of any of those things, Madam Speaker. I fear no issue and no one, besides the wrath of God. Let's get it done; let's stop pretending.

There's that old saying about '*when all is said and done a lot more is said than done*'. Well, it's time we stop talking about this and figure out a way to resolve it because it's been seven years since the EIA was required; it's been since 2005 that this has been discussed, Madam Speaker. Why is it that we have so many issues in this country that seem to take 15 or 20 years before somebody comes along and says, okay, I am going to grab this by the horns and we're going to wrestle it to the ground and figure out how to do it? It seems that's the pattern with so many things.

Madam Speaker, this has nothing to do with the National Conservation Act. The National Conservation Act has been in effect fully since probably about 2014/15, was passed in December 2013 by all Members of this House at the time on the third reading, after 33 changes were made to it to ensure it reflected the comments and the views of quite a number of Members of this House today but others as well who are not here today, Madam Speaker.

Yet, Madam Speaker, we have many people today saying they are really concerned about runaway development as they see it, about it having an impact on their quality of life. My WhatsApp is full every day, every morning, every night, of people sending pictures, videos, comments and requests; *please make a difference, please make it stop. Please. We feel like we're under threat enough as Caymanians.*

So, if that's out there, Madam Speaker, how could that happen if the National Conservation Act was preventing things from happening? If you look at the statistics, one per cent, one single per cent of applications that have been made and considered by the National Conservation Council have been required to do an Environmental Impact Assessment. One out of—I don't know what the number is right now—the last number I was aware of that was probably mid last year was approaching 4,000; about 3,800 rounded up.

Today that must be 4,500 or 4,600, I don't know exactly what it is, but I do know that statistically the requirements for an EIA is still around one per cent. These things are included as requirements Madam Speaker, not because anybody is trying to stop development, not because anybody wants to stop a road, but because the country and the agency doing it needs to be better informed about what the potential impacts are and how to stop the negative aspects of those impacts so we can spend the money safely, provide value for money for the people of this country, provide the benefits they want and need from whatever the infrastructure is that we're talking about doing; whatever the development is, Madam Speaker. That's why we do these things, so that we don't end up like Florida spending billions of dollars to undo a problem that was created 50 or 70 years earlier.

We don't want to leave that legacy for our children, Madam Speaker. We don't want to have that situation develop. Guesswork isn't good enough on something that is really important.

Thus, I don't have a problem with the Motion; considering the circumstances, where we are, what the people have been suffering, what we need to be able to do. Let's sit down and consider how we are going to get this thing done. That's what's important to us, not chest beating. That's what it is important to our people because I can tell you, you give them something and you get short-term benefit from it and it is not done properly, for sure, a few years later, when the reality hits home and the bill comes in, it would be your name that gets blackened; you who gets blamed—not you, Madam Speaker, I mean us policymakers and perhaps some of those who are involved in the agencies—we will all get blamed for it.

Then, you know who pays the bill? The Government, the country pays the bill because at the end of the day when big bills come in, when you don't manage finances properly, when there are overruns—when a company is building something and they have their budget, then they have a 25 to 50 to 75 per cent overrun, most of the time they can't go to the bank because they've already done the financing and the financing is considering a 25 per cent margin contingency. Therefore, if you go above that, you have to go back to the shareholders and ask them to put in additional money to help make up the difference.

Our shareholders, Madam Speaker, are the people of this country who elected us and put their trust

in us to make the right decisions for them, to consider and talk to them when we need to get their input and their views; to recognise when they are facing challenges, to recognise when we have to push harder to get something done for them.

Today, Madam Speaker, is day one that we have to push harder and anybody who isn't pushing along the people will have problems with them; they will have problems with the people and if I am here, I too will have problems with them, because I'll have to be behind them, pushing and reminding and saying this is what we said we were going to deliver for the people of this country and this is what we have to do.

Madam Speaker, failure to deliver for all these years is unacceptable, and failure to deliver meaningful interim solutions to address the problems, to provide some kind of real relief for our people for the time being, failure not to put those in place is not an option Madam Speaker. We cannot abandon our people for the length of time it takes to address the issues to ensure that we are able to provide a final solution.

Madam Speaker, I have never in my life been afraid of failure. I've failed plenty times, that's how you learn. However, this is one thing, Madam Speaker, I am old enough to know how to avoid failure, how to push and get things done.

Now we have to do this Madam Speaker, whatever the feelings of anyone, I hope I haven't offended anybody with this straight talk because this is what it is, Madam Speaker.

I thank you, and this country deserves our best efforts. We must deliver. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: I think this is a good time for us to take a suspension. We will resume at 8 o'clock.

Proceedings suspended at 7.24p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 8.21p.m.

The Speaker: Please be seated. Proceedings are resumed.

We were debating the Motion.

Does anyone else wish to speak on the motion? *[Pause]* Does anyone else wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does anyone else wish to speak?

I will now call on the mover of the Motion to exercise his right of reply. Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank all those Members who chose to rise to speak and those who have not risen but will give their support. I especially want to thank the Member for Bodden Town East for constantly being an advocate for the construction of the

road, but the truth is that is what he does— advocate and represent his people.

I want to thank the Member for Bodden Town West for seconding the Motion and for his advocacy for the road. He lives in that area, he too feels it. As I said, I thank all the Members, including the Opposition for their support. It shows that Members want the road done and believe that the right thing is being done here tonight. I think they all believe, Madam Speaker, that the resolve section is not something that is unthinkable, but it's a viable way to move forward.

Madam Speaker, none has been more vocal and straight forward about his responsibility for roads than my colleague, the Minister of PAHI and the Member for North Side. Several Cabinet Ministers have risen to speak; the Cabinet need now give him the wherewithal and the funds to get the job done. Madam Speaker, if the attitude is taken, that we have to wait until a full EIA is completed, I will say to all of them, *what you say you support, will be something done in the distant future.* I don't think that's what Members I want.

I think, Madam Speaker, yes, we fail to plan sufficiently over the years, and that's not deliberate, Madam Speaker. You get into government and one matter after the next comes up and you have to divert your attention and of course, there are those in opposition against you that you have to fight— not even talking about the Opposition in the House—I am talking about outside Opposition. So you try to do some things and one issue after the next arise and you have to deal with it and sometimes those things get lost in all the other plans.

Madam Speaker, there is talk about national planning, and I said what I said earlier because I know that between 2009 and 2012 I put together Messrs. Kenneth Ebanks and Carson Ebanks, two top planners in this country, to put together and start the national plan and look at the social aspect of the country, in particular. Of course, you look at all sectors.

Mr. Kenneth got sick, very sick, and all of that fell by the wayside and then we had a dirty Governor who did everything no matter what we did— if we said "a" he said no, it was something else and so we couldn't get anywhere with some of it. Suffice it to say, as I said earlier, that you get into government well-intentioned, with all your plans, things you campaigned on. You get in, maybe it is finances, maybe it is other national issues that take forefront, take all your time, take your attention, and then there are those who oppose you and I am saying not necessarily the Opposition inside the House, but people outside who have their own agenda set against you.

I said what I said just now about the full EIA because I believe that there is a lobby determined to stop things in this country. They want to stop development and they don't want to see that road completed for whatever their reasons are, and you got some just

opposing for the sake of doing so, just to frustrate people.

I recall—and we were talking about it earlier—an article in the newspaper that the government had reached an agreement with the National Trust and I don't think that I am mistaken in that—you have a copy—that they had agreed where the road should go. I know it came out in the papers, and then all of a sudden they stopped. I think they were on the rebound and started to oppose the government. They joined that lobby.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Certainly the road reached a compromise between the government and the National Trust. It reads:

“A controversial plan to build a \$40 million highway extension through part of the Mastic Trail Nature Reserve has been revised following negotiations between government and the National Trust. The planned route for the road was moved to the south of the reserve in a compromise deal that Trust officials described as ‘historic’ and said would save swathes of environmentally significant wetlands. Premier Alden McLaughlin hailed the deal as a ‘happy medium’ that addresses environmental concerns while ensuring the \$360 million Ironwood golf resort project” (which was slated to go at the time), **“would still go ahead.”** Of course, the article is longer than that, and I don't have a copy for you, Madam Speaker, I was just given this one, but I remembered it, as I am sure the Member for Red Bay did.

All sorts of things come up, and with the best will in the world you don't get to finalise the plans, so I think yes, we fail to plan sufficiently, but not wilfully; but if you listen to some of these people, boy—the things that they say, the things that they push in the social media, particularly the press, it seems to be dominated there. Yes, in certain areas we failed to plan sufficiently, not wilfully, though.

I say that, Madam Speaker, because when we think of the damage done by [Hurricane] Ivan we know that if we hadn't insisted in several governments, on putting in the Planning Code we did, we would have been much worse off in Ivan because there was much damage but many homes, many buildings were intact because over the years we had improved our planning code. So yes, there must be better planning, but Madam Speaker, let no one believe that this little Island—the Foreign Office told me one time, *“You are a little 2x4 island. You think you can stand up to us?”*

Well, no one need think if while waiting for better planning operations to take place, we can just say we are not moving ahead on things, and Madam Speaker, that is what we are trying to say here. There are things that need to be done, but the resolved section says that the government considers building the East-West Arterial Road with immediate effect from

Hirst Road to Lookout Gardens, as the less environmentally sensitive area, and only continue with the EIA study from Lookout Gardens to North Side, as the most sensitive area—and every Opposition Member who debated acknowledges that is a good way to go. Why do we have to have this long, drawn-out fight, headaches and hard feelings about it? The Motion is just recognising that what can be done should be done now. Do what is possible, and there is no real excuse for doing otherwise.

Madam Speaker, that law, I don't know what is the abbreviation for it. What is it? Conservation law? The law that everybody is arguing about now. The National Conservation Law.

Madam Speaker, I remember when this law was put in place, and I remember what was said to us, because section 49 was the saving grace at the time for the Member moving it. That was supposed to be the saving grace when everybody was complaining, *“The government's going to give this almighty power to a board over the say-so of Cabinet, whom the people elected, and the people will tear it down when they want something done, and need something done, and can't get it done.”* That was the big argument.

That was the saving grace at the time, which says, **“(49) The Cabinet may give to the Council in writing such general directions as appear to the Cabinet to be necessary having regard to the provisions of this Law, the Conventions, public interest and the Council shall act in accordance with such directions.”** Thus, there are three pertinent areas in this section. We can't play with words, Madam Speaker; that is what was said here, that is what was told to us here. That such would be the saving grace for people not to be able to just shove things down Cabinet's throat, and it is the opposite of what is being said here today.

To me, “general” has to mean that the Cabinet has an overriding legal position in the public interest. I know you are a trained lawyer, I am not, but I'm reading what is in here and I'm remembering what was said—mind you, my mother used to tell me that tongue say anything, then learned to talk, but it seems to me that is it. *In the public interest.* That has got to be wide enough, has to be wide enough, for government to move forward with the less sensitive, environmentally sensitive areas. I mean, that is not a play on words, so what then is ‘general’? Move a lime lizard? Plant a tree? Sell guinea grass?

What is ‘general’, other than to do what is needed? Well, maybe that's my layman's understanding and the lawyers will say *no, you are wrong* and I think that's why the Premier is kind of motioning to me that I am wrong in that understanding.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I got two more, too.

Madam Speaker, I think the need for the road has more than eloquently been put forward, not just tonight, not just today, but over a period of time.

I am concerned that the government seems to think they have this huge problem; well, they will now have to take the Motion away but the people of the eastern districts, those 18,000 people... Hello?! If the government does not move, they will know what to do and I remind Members, some of you are too young to know, but I well know of the whole matter when they were doing the cadastral survey and National Development Plan then which said they could take people as they wanted.

Ha, ha! The people said, “No, you don’t. You might think this is what is best, but you’re not going to take my family land and tell me what to do with it. You are going to tell me you are building the road through my land, but I can’t get onto the road? Oh, yeah?”, and they came out. Thousands of them. Now, cadastral was the best thing to happen as far as I am concerned but the way that they had that plan attached to that, which came right after that in ’76, you younger Members understand this: they were all swept out. The whole Cabinet. Ms. Annie Huldah Bodden was the only one who survived it because she jumped on Truman’s platform the night before election.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, yes. Well, it goes without saying that he was elected at that time.

If you cannot move forward and you get stuck in this situation that I am seeing and I am hearing, and I am not part of the Cabinet, not part of the Caucus, part of the executive, you are putting yourself in trouble. Better work together to find a solution to make this thing happen. Build the piece of road that you can build now, that is not going to hurt nobody. The only thing that can hurt is a few feelings but so be it; if they want to have hard feelings, make them have them. The fact is you are doing this for the people, and people are more important than a tree— and I am not talking about going and cutting down trees willy-nilly, no, that is not what I am saying. It is gazetted.

The people are hurting, the people are suffering. I don’t think I can say anymore, Madam Speaker. I hope that I have thanked all those who debated, those who offered unqualified support and I hope that the government will move forward as the resolution says, Madam Speaker.

I thank everyone again for agreeing and moving forward with this Motion.

The Speaker: The question is **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers building the East-West Arterial Road with immediate effect from Hirst road to Lookout Gardens as the less environmentally sensitive area, and only continue**

with the EIA study from Lookout Gardens to North Side as the moor sensitive area.

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

AYES.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Can we have a division Madam Speaker?

Division No. 11-2022/2023

AYES: 17

NOES: 0

Hon. G. Wayne Panton
 Hon. Juliana Y. O’Connor-Connolly
 Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan
 Hon. Sabrina T. Turner
 Hon. Johany S. Ebanks
 Hon. André M. Ebanks
 Hon. Bernie A. Bush
 Ms. Heather D. Bodden
 Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour
 Hon. Isaac D. Rankine
 Hon. W. McKeeva Bush
 Hon. Roy M. McTaggart
 Mr. Joseph Hew
 Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
 Ms. Barbara E. Conolly
 Mr. David C. Wight
 Mr. Christopher S. Saunders

Absent

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell

The Speaker: The results of the division is 17 Ayes. The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member’s Motion No. 8/2022-2023 passed.

**Private Member’s Motion No. 9/2022-2023
 High School in the District of West Bay**

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, the truth is, because I have to stand I would rather take the Motion after if the House agrees.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member’s Motion No. 9, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS the district of West Bay is constantly growing with a present population of over 13,000;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Government starts considering the planning process now to build and operate a High School in the district of West Bay within the next 4 years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that consideration be given for the inclusion of funds in the upcoming budget for the planning process and other needed costs to begin construction.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder? The Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: It's all right, Madam Speaker, it is a long day.

Madam Speaker, I rise to second the Motion by the Honourable Member for West Bay West.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto??

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I hope we can be much briefer in this Motion.

Madam Speaker, in moving this Motion it is totally about the need. In considering the expenditure for such an undertaking, I wanted to make sure that all things were put in the proper perspective [because] I have been here long enough to know that Government doesn't have a bottomless pit of revenue and we have to be as prudent as we must be. In these economic conditions the world over, we can't be willy-nilly about what we want or can afford and how we can get it, therefore, the most prudent building planning and practices must be employed; but before all of that, some kind of project manager needs to be employed and provisions need to be budgeted for.

Madam Speaker, as I rise to open the debate on this Motion, I am humbled and honoured to be able to do so on behalf of the people of West Bay. In our representational form of governance we are merely our constituents' mouthpiece, so the Motion is aimed at improving the quality of life of the people of West Bay on multiple fronts.

Let me acknowledge Almighty God without whose blessings, we would not be here. Even with the cut and thrust of the adversarial Westminster system and the Westminster form of politics we must first acknowledge that our Islands, as I said earlier today, are still one of the most blessed places on the face of the earth. Do we have problems? Yes, of course, but I think our blessings far outweigh our problems.

Madam Speaker, some Members might know that the notion of a high school in West Bay is not a new idea. In fact, this idea has been talked about and there have been similar motions over the past three decades. More recently, the Progressive governments at the time

designed, broke ground, and started the earthworks on the Beulah Smith High School.

During my last term as Premier and Minister of Finance we could not continue the project, as the Cayman Islands were not in compliance with the Public Management and Finance Act, which led to the UK having to approve the country's budgets from 2009 to 2013. Based on the budgetary stipulation set out by the UK at the time, the government I led had a choice to continue one of three high school projects:

- The Clifton Hunter;
- John Gray, or
- The Beulah Smith project.

We decided that we should continue the Clifton Hunter project as it was the farthest along, had the most money spent on it, and its catchment included Bodden Town—the fastest-growing district at the time—North Side, and East End. Over the next two political terms, Madam Speaker, 2013 and 2021, the John Gray High School was continued and officially opened just earlier this month.

I believed it important to provide a brief historical context to remind Parliament that this is nothing new. I [also] believe it is now time to revisit the situation in West Bay and that we should be able to support this Motion with unanimous consent. The benefits of the Motion are:

1. improved quality of teaching and learning;
2. improved behaviour;
3. improved student outcomes on examinations;
4. improved sporting competition;
5. improved traffic congestion; and
6. utilisation for community purposes as well.

Improved quality of teaching and learning:

Madam Speaker, says that the creation of a third government-run high school in the district of West Bay will allow us to have smaller classroom sizes which will in turn assist teachers, so they can focus on imparting knowledge to their students. This would have a positive impact on overall teaching and learning. Having an overall smaller school population to manage will also allow the Principal and the senior team to constantly evaluate teacher performance and improve teaching quality.

Improved behaviour: Madam Speaker, by building the high school in West Bay, we will create a smaller school community which will allow the Principal, the senior leadership team and teachers to get to know the students in a more meaningful way, ensuring that they meet the needs of each student as an individual. This, coupled with smaller classrooms, will inevitably improve behaviour; as we know, Madam Speaker, poor behaviour not only causes an individual student to underachieve. In fact, one single student can often disrupt the classroom causing other students to be negatively affected. I believe the building of the high school

in West Bay will help tremendously with student behaviour.

Improved student outcomes on examinations: Madam Speaker, I should say, we can thank God that with this current Minister we have seen much improvement on the educational front. Madam Speaker, with improved teaching and learning, and behaviour there will be an inevitable improvement in student outcomes in examinations. We must do everything possible to allow our students to improve their outcomes, as it improves their life chances once they exit mandatory education. We cannot understate how important it is for us as legislators, to give all of our children the best possible chance at having the opportunity to be a positive member of our society.

Improved sporting competition: Madam Speaker, the building of the high school in West Bay would foster greater inter-high school sporting competition. Having a third government-run high school would cause there to be yet another student body to compete with their peers across the various sports. There has been positive correlation found between student outcomes and high sport achievement because the discipline instilled by sport has a positive impact on students' ability to be more focused on their studies.

Improved traffic congestion: Madam Speaker, building the high school in West Bay will have a positive impact on overall traffic. It would take dozens of cars and buses off the road to transport West Bay students to John Gray. We know how bad the traffic situation is on Walkers Road during the 7 to 8AM and 3 to 4PM windows. The building of the high school in West Bay will improve that situation. So, Madam Speaker, there is something for us to rally behind in planning for a high school for our district.

The idea for constructing that high school in West Bay, as I say comes after many years, in recent times as a result of some of my own observations and following a number of discussions with community members and the other three Members from West Bay also. The proposal is driven by the observed need for additional educational hurricane shelter, emergency, community recreational facilities. All those things can be put in a modern building as the one here in George Town.

Sizing it would be left up to that body I spoke of, but this would go a long way though in satisfying, I think, the United Nations Development Goals, especially goal number 4— "**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.**" We cannot do this merely by the provision of physical structures in the schools; we know that we will also need well-trained educators who have a passion for teaching and learning. We also know that we must provide modern, cost-effective, energy-efficient, technologically innovative and environmentally sustainable school facilities. These will be conducive and enabling spaces for our children, indeed our whole community, to learn within.

Madam Speaker, as I look at the various studies and at what various countries were doing, there are so many elements; that's why I choose to reframe the Motion that way. Not just to be fair to Government, not just to try to put in millions of dollars at this time. I do believe that there can be some money put into the budget and maybe work ideas from what we have and utilise plans, but rework those plans to have a more modern facility. No, I haven't been there yet, but over the years I have looked at the plans, and in the course of building went to the one here in George Town. I haven't gone there since it was opened and I didn't get to the opening as I was not well.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to stop here and give other Members an opportunity, hoping that what the Motion is asking finds favour, as I said, not to overburden Government at the time, but especially, to get a project manager in the budget at least, to organise and move forward with such a project.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member. Does any other Member wish to speak? Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Deputy Premier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am cautiously optimistic that this Motion will not be near as controversial as the last Motion even though the conclusion was one I think we should have arrived at about three hours before we reached it.

I am happy to stand on behalf of the Government to say that we have looked at the Motion which seeks to have Government consider two aspects of the resolution, which would be firstly to consider the planning process to build so it would be a contract that goes out to design, bill and build, which we did with the George Town High School that we just recently opened—the new John Gray High School—and also to operate, which would be done by the Government; and it also specifies that the Honourable Member is desirous of it being in the district of West Bay and he has set a timeframe.

I can certainly give commitment for the first two years of the four years that are set there, but I am confident that at least three of the four West Bay Members can carry on that desire. As he too, has declared to exit the political scene, I wish to thank him for continuing in the legacy to ensure that adequate and appropriate and modern infrastructure is put in all of the various districts. As he indicated from a historical perspective, the former Premier and at the time Leader of Education had set out an education plan, which was also carried on by former Minister from West Bay, Mr. Rolston England and Miss Tara Rivers.

As one Member mentioned earlier on, it is not always the good fortune of a Member or Minister to be able to plant the seed, fertilise it, water it and also harvest it, and I think this is one of those situations where the seed was planted. It had to take a pause because

of financial reasons as it were, but it's now time for it to be resurrected and I am happy that I would have an integral role in carrying out the due consideration.

It is also asking in the second resolve, Madam Speaker, that due consideration be given for the inclusion of funds in the upcoming budget of which we spoke to in the SPS yesterday and in his way the Honourable Member is asking for consideration for the planning process and other needed and associated costs to begin the construction.

Madam Speaker, we will deal with the school as we have done with all other infrastructure that falls under the ambit of the Minister of Education. In that, we will follow the legislation in consideration to the various business cases that are needed, so that we can actually see the affordability and feasibility study. I believe the Member has done an excellent job not only in conveying but indeed mitigating the necessity of this school in the district of West Bay, so that aspect of the consideration will be extremely short for the Government because we are fully cognisant, Madam Speaker, that the journey to excellence in education has to be a continuous one.

Because we operate within the FFR we would like to wish in a utopia that we could have built all three schools, and I am happy to have been here for such a time as this, when we have completed one big school which was a feat in itself which many said could not be done; and I am sure many will say that this cannot be done.

I give the undertaking from a personal perspective, that I will do all within my power to ensure that the requisite statutory requirements are completed and that colleagues are rallied to ensure the several million that it will take to do the business cases to get it to a place where the terms of reference are done and it can go through procurement that we can have a ground-breaking before the Member for West Bay West and I exit the political stage— which should probably make quite a few people happy. However, when history is written in the Cayman Islands, hopefully before our eulogies are written, they would see that we have been able to contribute significantly not just to the infrastructural development but the sociological development of this country on a whole.

Thus, Madam Speaker, I am delighted that on behalf of the government we can undertake here today to give due consideration to this infrastructural development in the district of West Bay, which will go a long way in facilitating the continued journey towards excellence.

May it please you, ma'am.

The Speaker: Thank you. Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Youth Sports, and Heritage.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I was very happy when I saw this come before us. The Minutes

will show about six weeks ago in Caucus, and on Any Other Business, I brought it to the attention of my fellow Caucus members.

Yourself, myself, Minister André Ebanks and the Member for West Bay West who has brought this [Motion] to the House, we saw the need, not the want but the need, for a school in West Bay; but meantime, if things can also be looked at, the primary school which is now the biggest primary school in the Island—I think it almost doubles most primary schools— could use even four more classrooms. It is something that could be looked into as well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister of Financial Services?

Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will be brief to say only that I think that the mover of the Motion, the Member for West Bay West has outlined reasons and grounds that have merit.

I was happy to see and have consultation with the Deputy Premier in her capacity as the Minister responsible for Education to see her prudent approach in terms of preparation. I think it is something that displays proper planning, and as my colleague the Minister for Youth and Sports has indicated, we will form part of the Caucus that will help to ensure that preparations are put in place so that we have future planning and we can start the process of having this goal reach fruition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

I will now ask the mover of the Motion if he wishes to exercise his right of reply,

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, taking due notice of how late it is getting and there is still more business to be done, let me just cut things short.

In closing, I thank the Honourable Minister for her support. I know you, yourself, Madam Speaker as an MP from the district, and our two colleagues who just rose to speak, look forward to working and would at some point meet with her to discuss the way forward to see just how we can get some of this moving.

Maybe I have ideas, we need to meet with my constituents, I think, in a district-wide meeting to get feedback from them because we want this to be a place the community can utilise. We are getting good buildings, we have good buildings but far too many schools are locked up at night, rather than having a cafetorium. If we make it big enough, it could double as a hurricane shelter, because that is something we need; but it could be used for many community purposes. The Minister of Sports would be able to work with the Minister of

Education to get a pool. Those are things that I think we need to consider.

We are not in the 1950s anymore. We have moved forward in this 21st century, and now we have to consider our revenue but offer support to the Minister for her ideas, for the things that she knows her district needs as well; these are things that we have to consider and certainly I'm willing to work with her and I think she is willing to work with us on the proposed project going forward. There will be more time in the budget for me to elaborate on some of the areas that I figure would need to be covered in the whole thing, the different kind of spaces that are needed bearing in mind people's health, even children with some deficiencies that will still be at the high schools. All these things need to be taken into consideration.

I will stop there, Madam Speaker, just to thank everyone again for their support.

The Speaker: The question is:

BE IT RESOLVED that the government starts considering the planning process now to build and operate a high school in the district of West Bay within the next four years; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that consideration be given for the inclusion of funds in the upcoming budget for the planning process and other needed costs to begin construction.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 9/2022-2023 passed

**Private Member's Motion No. 10/2022-2023
Task force for fair distribution of
gratuities collected in the Tourism Industry**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 10 which reads as follows:

WHEREAS there is continued complaints of the distribution of gratuities collected in the tourism industry;

BE IT RESOLVED that Government considers establishing a task force to investigate the problem in the tourism industry particularly (but not limited to) the condominium sector, of gratuities that are collected to be distributed to staff to ensure that it is being done in full;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task-force report their findings by the 30th September, 2023.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder? The elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, I rise to second the Motion by the Member for West Bay West.

The Speaker: Thank you. The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

I do want to thank my colleague, the Member for Bodden Town West, for agreeing and working with me on the Motion. I know that he knows what it means because his father worked there; his late father worked in the tourism industry, so he knows what it means to people.

Madam Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the Minister of Tourism for his valiant efforts, his hard work to bring back tourism to a good position after the maddening, dangerous, situation we had with the pandemic; and his efforts for the region, where he is making his mark.

No two ways about it, Madam Speaker, tourism is moving forward, and while there are other areas that have tremendous concerns—I think we would have some concerns too—tourism is growing, and so I want to ensure that the gratuities collected by these properties, whether they're restaurants, condominiums or hotels, are passed on to the workers.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in opening and thanking the seconder of the Motion, I am well acquainted with it. I worked there, that's where I began work. My grandmother worked and she took me along just to help, and I liked it and then I went off to try to learn commerce and banking, but my mother worked there all her life—40 years of it at least, and I know just how important it is.

I know that in my district, and I speak often of my district rather than naming other places because, of course, I don't know everybody from George Town or wherever that works [in tourism]. I do know many people from West Bay, many of the women, particularly, but George Town has them, Bodden Town has them. All over, the women of the country helped to build our tourism industry, and some of them [are affected] by these gratuities and the non-payment or outright theft of it, because what else do we term it, Madam Speaker, what else?

Madam Speaker, some of these properties collect 10, some 15, some up to 18 per cent and out of \$60,000 15 staff are receiving maybe \$15,000 amongst the 15 of them, so what happened to the balance? Madam Speaker, I had to take this on as Minister of Labour and followed it up when I became Minister of Tourism, and it was a fight and I made all sorts of enemies because I took people to the Labour Board and

made sure that some of them went there four and five times for their dirt, taking the poor working people's gratuities and not paying them. Not paying them. Madam Speaker, it is still going on. I am still getting complaints.

I know one place, Madam Speaker that grossed over \$300,000 in December, 2019; at 10 per cent, \$30,000 is supposed to go to the staff, right? We know that some of them get paid 15, sometimes 18 per cent, but minimum of \$30,000 in December. That was December. In January and February 2020, they grossed over \$400,000 and in February, when they closed down because of COVID, they had already grossed over \$300,000 so over a million dollars.

Madam Speaker, one Caymanian woman did not receive one dollar in that whole year, much less at that time and Madam Speaker, the poor Jamaicans and the Latinos—the Hondurans and Cubans—got very little. Jamaicans that I knew were sick, the family was sick and they barely got anything. I had to help them personally. I say this, Madam Speaker, because I know it. You know how I know? That's how I got in problems, because of the theft of the gratuities! That is how I got in problems. The staff called me, I went there, and the manager didn't want me there and her and her friend beat the hell out of me.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: However, I took the blame because I grabbed them to get my phone.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: And they are talking about it, yet the video shows them. That's what happened, and it was not the first time, because she was fired from a restaurant down the street for doing the same thing and that's not the only one. As I said, I had to take some property managers to the Labour Board. They keep double books, is what they do. One of them was out here campaigning against me about, *let us support her* because I took them to court five times as the Minister of Labour.

Madam Speaker, we need to do something to ensure that our people, no matter where they come from, whether they are on permit or whatever they're on, they are our people, they are working for us, they must be taken care of, and this situation, people depend especially now, especially now, when times are hard, people depend on their gratuities. Back in my mother's day, some of these women depended on it to add a room to their house. You walked along West Bay Road and you saw them standing, you saw them going in the morning walking, you gave them a ride. You saw them in the afternoon by 3-3.30 going home, you would give them a ride. Rain or sunshine they were out there going to work. They helped build the industry.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, and we know, Madam Speaker, we know when you see that kind of figures and they are not getting their money. As I said, one Caymanian woman did not receive \$1; not \$1, and when the representative goes to speak, he is a bad man. He is not good. He is going to do this, he is going to do that.

All I am asking is that Government puts this taskforce together and put them there to get something done, examine in whichever way under the law, because there is a law. We changed the law and introduced all sorts of penalties but they have gone back at it. Twenty years later, they are still doing it.

Madam Speaker, I hope, I do hope, that we can get something done now.

The Speaker: The elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I recognise that the hour is late and we are trying to get through other business, but it would be remiss of me if I did not lend my voice to this Motion that is brought by the Honourable Member for West Bay West. As he mentioned in his remarks to this House, this is something personal, near and dear to me, Madam Speaker.

While I can say that during my father's working years, I don't think [it was] the culture back then, at least where he worked, I never heard complaints about the staff not getting their gratuity. I know in some cases people used to complain that the bartenders were getting paid too much because they were getting gratuities plus tips. As some of you may be aware, he worked at Holiday Inn during the days when Holiday Inn was in full swing, the Barefoot Man and everyone was there; and I can honestly say, Madam Speaker, that raising five kids, my father was able to send five kids to college on a bartender's salary; so I know the value that tourism brings to this country.

Equally, Madam Speaker, just to put it in context for Members of this honourable House and for members of the listening public, when we look at the contribution rate for gratuity, if most places are charging a 10 per cent gratuity rate, and when you consider that the government tourism accommodation tax, which is also based on rooms revenue, generates anywhere from \$35-36 million a year looking at those numbers pre-COVID, if memory serves me right.

If you are talking about a contribution rate of 10 per cent, you are easily talking about a gratuity pool in excess of around \$30 million per year, so when you're talking about gratuities, I don't want people to think that we are talking about small amounts, because while it may be \$200 or \$300 a year for some people, in the grand scheme of things we are talking about \$30 million annually, at least.

Madam Speaker, most organisations that we find that would steal the nice staff's gratuity, you find out that there is a very strong probability that these may be the very same organisations that would sometimes collect pension and don't pay it in, which is also tantamount to theft. Some of these very same organisations will collect money to pay a portion of their employees' health insurance costs for them, and then to find out, when they need the health insurance, that it is not there.

I say that to say, Madam Speaker, that when this taskforce goes out and look for these organisations and they find that they are in breach, don't just stop there; look and see if they are also paying the pension, because many of us here would have heard the horror stories when we had the pension holiday and people thought they had money and they needed money and basically there was no money there. We all have heard the stories too, Madam Speaker, where people think they have health insurance because it is being deducted from their salaries, but it is not being paid. Chances are, if they are taking from their employees one way, more than likely they will be taking another way.

Madam Speaker, we do recognise that as the tourism industry is still not predominantly Caymanian at this time it is very easy for us or many [others] to kind of disregard it. Recognising that a large number of people who work in that industry are non-Caymanians, these are the kinds of things that if we turn a blind eye and allow injustice— because Madam Speaker, if we are going to be brutally honest and true to ourselves, for the longest while we have ignored some things in this country.

It is only when it starts to really affect Caymanians and by extension affect voters, that we basically turn some attention to it. However, there are things or certain behaviours within any country, which I consider *blessing blockers*, things that do not allow us to get the blessings that we should be getting based on some of the things that we turn away from.

Madam Speaker, while I am on this topic, and it is a motion that I wanted to touch on but I didn't get a chance to because we had a maximum of three that I filed. While the Ministry of Labour is looking at these things, I would also ask them to take a look at how some of the domestic [helpers] in this country are treated. It is wrong. We are treating some domestic helpers in this country wrong, and these are the kind of behaviours we need to stop in this country.

The people who get gratuities are mostly the unskilled people, the ones who work the long hours and hardly see their families yet they are some of the worst-treated people in this country. We need to treat them better; we need to do right by them. So Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Member for West Bay West for bringing this. It is something that we need to deal with because too many people in this country are

getting robbed of their hard-earned money unnecessarily.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As Minister of Labour I wanted to say a few words on this Private Member's Motion No. 10, Task Force for Fair Distribution of Gratuities Collected in the Tourism Industry. Madam Speaker, it is critical that we deliver good service in tourism and business. The comfort, care, and sense of welcome that travellers receive can make or break their Cayman experience.

Madam Speaker, a shared gratuity system, if properly implemented, can make a substantial positive impact on this front. The benefits of a well-executed gratuity system are plenty. It promotes good service and teamwork, and provides an incentive for staff to consistently perform. Additionally, Madam Speaker, a good gratuity system provides a means for the lowest earners in the hospitality industry to earn a decent income by sharing in the gratuities for their outstanding service. Sadly, Madam Speaker, we have received several complaints about some businesses cheating on the grats by charging resort fees that bypass the gratuities law and short-changed the workers.

While the Department of Labour and Pension is auditing monthly reports and are dealing with breaches they detect, I believe more can be done legislatively to prevent businesses from taking advantage of their workers and not giving them their fair share of the gratuities pot. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I strongly endorse this Motion and look forward to improving the gratuities legislation to ensure transparency and understanding among employees. A fair and honestly-administered gratuity system is vital for the success of the tourism and business industries as well as the workers themselves.

I thank the Member for West Bay West for bringing this Motion and the Member for Bodden Town West for seconding it. I also want to thank the Minister and the Chief Officer who are still here, which I applaud, for this kind contribution that we are able to provide here tonight. I heard the Member for Bodden Town West's passionate plea, Madam Speaker, and I can tell you we too, on this side have our concerns and will address all matters going forward.

I thank you. Goodnight.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, very briefly, but I rise on behalf of the Opposition to indicate our support for the Motion before us which we believe is timely. Like many, we do hear stories and get information with regard to what we perceive to be abuses of the system, so we are happy to see it move forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Does any other Member—the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise to offer the Government's full support, along with the Minister of Labour who would lead the charge in respect to this area, as it is a labour dispute within the industry for which I am responsible. I must say that as Minister of Tourism, I also have received a number of complaints in the short period of time since we have been fully reopened and employees are back to work.

I therefore welcome this, and will be offering my Ministry's full support with any data or necessary resources to support the Minister of Labour so that we can set up an appropriate taskforce and potentially come back with findings that can resolve this long-standing matter for the hard-working employees of this very, very, important industry that Caymanians survive on.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Youth and Sports.

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Madam Speaker, I, too, am happy to see this here. I would also like to add, for when the Ministry for Labour goes into these establishments, that there is also a culture in the way our people are being treated as workers.

Madam Speaker, they are being antagonised, they are being short-changed on hours. I have gotten many other complaints and these are not from lazy people— these are hard-working people being pushed to the limits for them to resign so they can have an excuse to bring people from outside, so maybe this is something that can be looked into as well.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* I now call on the mover of the motion to exercise his right of reply.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, just to thank all Members who have spoken and to thank the Honourable Minister who is charged with labour.

Madam Speaker, there are many ways to penalise people who refuse to do the right thing. As I said, it is tantamount to stealing when they get the gratuities and don't pay and it is not small amounts. As I said, one

small business... It was not a big business. It was not a big business but look how much they received in three months, and one Caymanian couldn't get a dollar? And they treat the Jamaicans and the Latinos awful— awful.

I don't know whether they will be able to wait on legislation. I know the legislation needs to be changed, but I would hope that they could put the taskforce together before, as the Motion calls for a report by September 30th. Hopefully the Minister will be able to undertake it and will be able to get it done. I know that the Cabinet seems to be in full support and he would have an easier time to get things done.

Just to thank the Minister for his commitment and his Cabinet colleagues; the Minister of Tourism, which I think has some bearing on this as well, because most of this is tourism business. Madam Speaker, I don't think I can take this any further.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The question is:

BE IT RESOLVED that Government considers establishing a task force to investigate the problem in the tourism industry particularly (but not limited to) the condominium sector, of gratuities that are collected to be distributed to staff to ensure that it is being done in full;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the taskforce report their findings by the 30th of September, 2023.

All those in favour, please say aye those against no,

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 10/2022-2023 passed.

**Private Member's Motion No. 11/2022-2023
Implementing traffic calming and safety
measures along roads in Red Bay and Prospect**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 11 of the 2022-2023 session entitled "Implementing traffic calming and safety measures along roads in Red Bay and Prospect", which reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Cayman Islands' 2021 Census of Population and Housing Report, reports that the population of George Town is now almost 35,000 people— about 49% of the entire population of the Cayman Islands— and more than the combined population of West Bay and Bodden Town;

AND WHEREAS the 2021 Census also reports that there are over 19,000 private vehicles in George Town, meaning that almost 40% of the residents in George Town own a car;

AND WHEREAS the Red Bay and Prospect constituencies are among the fastest growing and most populous communities in George Town;

AND WHEREAS the roads in the Red Bay and Prospect communities are heavily travelled, not just by residents of those two constituencies, but also by traffic travelling to and from the Eastern districts;

AND WHEREAS the Red Bay and Prospect constituencies are home to six schools, including three - Lighthouse School, Red Bay Primary and the Achievement Centre - along the busy stretch of Shamrock Road from Brown's On The Run Gas Station to the Tomlinson Roundabout;

AND WHEREAS there is inadequate provision of sidewalks along the aforementioned roads;

AND WHEREAS the Elected Member for Red Bay (yours truly) receives many complaints of near misses, dangerous driving and, in particular, speeding along Red Bay and Prospect constituency roads, particularly on Shamrock Road, Marina Drive, Selkirk Drive and Abbey Way;

AND WHEREAS such dangerous driving poses risk to life and limb in what are family communities with many people, including children, walking, cycling, as well as travelling on motorbikes and electric scooters;

AND WHEREAS the constituencies of Red Bay and Prospect Park have been the scene of fatal motor vehicle accidents over the years, the most recent being a fatal single car collision on Mangrove Avenue in February 2022;

AND WHEREAS it is the responsibility of Government to ensure the safety of public roads, including the provision of sidewalks in heavily travelled areas, specifying places to overtake safely, safe speed limits and appropriate traffic calming measures;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that in order to ensure the safety of the roads in the Red Bay and Prospect communities, as a matter of urgency the Government do **CONSIDER** authorising and instructing the responsible agency or agencies to provide sidewalks in heavily travelled areas and suitable traffic calming measures, including speed humps as required generally, but especially along Selkirk Drive, Abbey Way and Marina Drive.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder of the Motion? The Elected Member for George Town South.

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

I rise to second the Motion brought by the Honourable Member for Red Bay Private Member's Motion No. 11/2022-2023.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I do indeed.

Madam Speaker, the Red Bay and Prospect constituencies are really part of one big community, collectively the largest single residential area in the entire Cayman Islands.

The constituency lines between Red Bay and Prospect are probably more artificial in nature than any of the other constituencies; in that, the lines have simply been drawn to try to ensure similar numbers of constituents or voters in each constituency, but in many respects they are all really part of one community, so much so that we had an association called the Prospect and Red Bay Community Group, which still operates on two WhatsApp chat platforms, discussing matters of concerns across both of these constituencies.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, the line is so artificial in nature, particularly along Marina Drive that, as the Member for Red Bay I represent one side of Marina Drive, and the Minister for Health and Wellness, the Member for Prospect, represents the other side of the road. That is how closely interlinked these two communities are.

As I said in the Motion, Madam Speaker, there are six schools in the Prospect and Red Bay communities and therefore there is much traffic and many children moving up and down from those schools in the morning and in the afternoon when school is out. There are not sufficient sidewalks, particularly along that stretch of the road from Red Bay Primary up to the junctions with Prospect Drive and Marina Drive, and there are no sidewalks whatsoever along Marina Drive, which is the most heavily-travelled road in the entire Prospect and community area.

Madam Speaker, when I became the representative for Red Bay ten years ago now—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Ten years? No, six; six years ago, but I have been the representative for George Town overall for 22.5 years now, and I have lived in Prospect Park for more than 31 years, so I know the area very, very, well.

Most of the roads in, what have become the Prospect and Red Bay constituencies were in bad shape. Marina Drive, in particular, had many potholes flooding all the time, so over the course of the time that I have been a representative of Red Bay, we have worked hard to bring those roads up to standard and most of the main thoroughfares— Marina Drive,

Mangrove Avenue, Prospect Drive, Victory Avenue, Selkirk Drive, Abbey Way—all now have, to use the fancy term, *pavement of asphaltic concrete* or Barber Greene as we used to call it in the old days; so the roads are generally in very good shape.

In the last few years of my last term, we went an extra mile and did work as well on Admiral's Landing Road, and so the roads in Prospect and the communities are generally in very good shape but, unfortunately, the law of unintended consequences has never been repealed and one of the unintended consequences of that was that some of them have been used as raceways and we have many issues and concerns with speeding.

Further, because of the traffic congestion, many people now, not just now but in recent years, rather than coming down the East-West Arterial, or Crighton Boulevard or whatever we want to call it, to the Tomlinson Roundabout, will turn right on Poindexter, in the area of Prospect Primary and the Cayman Islands Football Association (CIFA) football field, and go that way on Poindexter, come out, turn on to Siberia Avenue and then onto Mahogany Way, or go all the way down Almond Avenue and turn left onto Marina Drive. The point I am trying to make with this, Madam Speaker, there is much traffic up and down those roads, and one of the consequences has been speeding.

Now, in February of last year, we had just recently paved Mangrove Avenue and along comes a young man speeding—I shouldn't make those judgments but I believe that's what everyone would conclude, ran into a concrete wall and unfortunately, died in consequence. Since then, the Government moved swiftly to put in speed humps there and I am not hearing many issues. Although it is not my constituency, it is just a road over from where I live, so I hear what is going on over there and it doesn't seem to be a big issues there.

Marina Drive, however, continues to pose a major challenge and I don't want to speak this into being, but unless we do something about the speeding and reckless driving to Marina Drive, somebody is going to get killed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: I have no doubt in my mind about it. I see it, I watch it, plus I get the reports. Now, I have heard all sorts of excuses put forward why traffic calming measures should not be put in there—because it's going to affect emergency vehicles, it's going to affect those who are pulling boats on trailers, because of course, the marina is right at the very end. All of it Madam Speaker, I believe to be nonsense, because there are countless roads that have speed humps in Cayman where people live, and emergency vehicles get to them.

Even if this were a concern, I would still say that there is a responsibility by Government, by the NRA, by the police and traffic to ensure the safety of those roads, and if speed humps are not the way to go, then please find some other measure, because we will all come here to this House and do as is done almost every day—send out our condolences to the families on the loss of some life that was lost unnecessarily in these circumstances. We will go around to the families as good representatives do, and offer our condolences and assistance and stand up in church and read the obituary and tributes; but let's not have to get to that point in relation to these roads in Red Bay and Prospect.

Let us as a Parliament resolve, and let the Government, as the government, take the necessary action to avoid these quite predictable consequences if we continue not to act, so my plea to the Government is to approve this Motion, consider the matter carefully and act expeditiously.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Madam Speaker, thank you.

It is indeed an honour to sit on this side of this Chamber and hear my friend, but more so right now my constituent battling, battling, for works to be done within our respective constituencies. Having lived there for over what? 17, 18 years and being a very active member in the community as a whole, I concur with the Member for Red Bay to whom I am his constituent.

[Laughter]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: It is so ironic. We are one family, and as I have been preaching from the day I got in this House, there are certain things where no political lines, boundaries abound and that's exactly what has been demonstrated on this Floor tonight.

Now, I must admit, and I agree, that my representative really did a lot of work in Red Bay and how it is divided, I must say, Prospect was neglected. There are roads and infrastructure needs within the Prospect constituency that have been neglected, and it has been proven, for over 20 years; and within the first year, I thank my colleague and friend, the Honourable Jay Ebanks for assisting me in getting beginning works (a part two is coming) for Raven Avenue and Bedrock Circle off Spotts-Newlands Road, because for decades, roads and drains in that area were non-existent.

Young Caymanian families made huge investments in the back of Raven Avenue into their first homes, and during Ida and Grace, I know what I saw when you had the Regiment going down there in big-wheel trucks having to turnaround because of how high the standing water was; but today Madam Speaker, I am pleased and thanks to the support of my colleagues

and the tireless work of the NRA crew for coming to my call and having installed drains within the Bedrock Circle area.

There is much more work to be done, because what is missing now is the installation of a waste-water management pump system that I have been speaking about with my colleague, the Minister for Infrastructure and Works, and more culverts— for the injection wells for the culverts now, to also be put in to allow the water to drain out of that area and, I think, into some of the dykes on the opposite side of the road which would be headed to the North sound.

It is quite interesting because through the previous motion that was so heavily debated, I see the need for improving our infrastructure, but I also cringe in fear. I cringe in fear for my people; for those children, my children, and I share the sentiments of my Honourable colleague and friend the Minister of Education, whom I have personally written asking for something to be looked into for the safety of our children who stand at the top of Adventure Street and Norfolk [Drive] every morning and here we are, putting in another lane in preparation for the extension of the East West Arterial.

However, I am now speaking to my other colleague and friend Minister (Johany) Ebanks, to make sure that we put in the necessary infrastructure for drainage but more so, the necessary and so badly-needed soft shoulder infrastructure for our children to be dropped off and picked up safely. That may require collaboration with the school and the contracts they enter into with the school bus drivers. Is it a case where we are expanding our roads in this highway? If we are going to take people's property by going into the backyard because, again, I don't know if it was the lack of foresight when these bypasses were being put in.

We constantly hear light poles are now being placed. Where is the underground infrastructure? Why are we still running power lines above? Where are the bicycle lanes? Where are those sidewalks for some of the inner roads within the Red Bay/Prospect constituency that we are now strongly advocating for? Hearing the cries of the parents, it is something they screamed for.

Inclement weather is coming now. The rainy season is upon us, what happens? We have to look at things differently, but more so, my concern is really moving forward with all the infrastructure and works that are going on right now within the Red Bay and Prospect constituency area, because it is a drive-through for everyone coming from the eastern districts. Where is the future planning for persons using the roads, especially, bus stop facilities?

Being a constituent of Red Bay, it is my pleasure to support my elected representative's motion, but definitely extend it further hoping that when those persons are contracted to carry out the works and improvements for the safety and well-being of all commuters and users of our roadways internally they look to the future.

Moreover, look at putting in the necessary infrastructure for swells to be constantly cleared, culverts and definitely, where possible, either change the drop off and pick up [points] for those using public transport including the schoolchildren and definitely, having bus shelters strategically placed as well.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? [Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [Pause] The Elected Member for George Town South.

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

My contribution will be very brief, as the mover of the Motion has done a great job in laying out the case with reasons why this Motion should be supported by all in this House.

I thank the Member for Red Bay for bringing this important and necessary Motion. It is an important Motion Madam Speaker, and yes, it is urgent and necessary for it addresses an increasing concern amongst many of us in this House and in particular those who reside on Selkirk Drive, Abbey Way and Marina Drive. A concern about keeping the people on our roads safe, and as far as possible, keeping them alive, Madam Speaker. A concern about speeding, especially within our communities that endangers the lives of people walking and biking, especially our children.

The Motion speaks to having six schools in the Red Bay constituency. Madam Speaker, my constituency has at least nine schools, and I receive representation from my constituents on a regular basis about safety issues in terms of the traffic and speeding on Walkers Road. The safety of our children and indeed, our people, is paramount— indeed, it is one of the Government's primary responsibilities.

Many of the roads in our older communities particularly in George Town, Bodden Town and West Bay are relatively narrow; automobiles or even motorbikes speeding down narrow streets and around corners can become a dangerous weapon. We have seen too many hit and run accidents, especially with cars hitting cyclists. This past week and over recent months, we have seen too many vehicular accidents that have claimed our people's lives.

At the start of this meeting, Madam Speaker, you kindly allowed us to remember some of our constituents that passed on. One of those was my constituent; a young man whose life was taken tragically as a result of yet another accident on our roads. Again, we in this House extend condolences to his family.

This Motion, Madam Speaker, reminds us that it is also the Government's responsibility to ensure people's safety on our public roads. That includes the provision of sidewalks in heavily travelled areas; deciding on appropriate speed limits for roads, and yes, putting in place appropriate traffic calming measures, but perhaps we do not always remember that keeping people

safe on our streets is as important as all the other safety responsibilities of the government.

There is a reason why a speed bump used to be called a sleeping policeman, because it helps slow down speeding cars. Perhaps we need to return to calling them that, perhaps we need to be reminded of that; but sadly, Madam Speaker, perhaps we are reminded when we have lost a life.

I do not know if it is just an NRA policy or whether it is the law that you need 75 per cent of the people on a street to agree to install a sleeping policeman before it can be done, but this Parliament can send a different message. A message where the MP for a constituency identifies a traffic calming problem and recommends that the NRA take the proposal seriously and act, because I know that at times it is very difficult to get 75 per cent of the people on the street and I think it has to be the owners of the homes who agree to have a sleeping policeman installed.

Madam Speaker, this Motion does not call for that but if we are agreeable, I hope that we can amend it to do so; if not, then at least do what the Motion calls for and consider requiring the NRA to build sidewalks and install traffic calming devices on the most travelled roads, especially those within our small communities—that includes my own.

Madam Speaker, I promised to be brief. This is not a political motion and I think all of us should support it, as we all have similar issues in our constituencies.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Saved you the energy of asking if anyone wants to speak.

[Laughter]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Madam Speaker, I just want to say a few things in support of this Motion and recognising once having lived at the bottom of Marina Drive as well how busy those roads are and the communities that live there.

Taking it even further, Madam Speaker, first of all, if we are encouraging our children to go outside and get exercise, those people living in apartments and without large yards, you can't even trust your kids to go out and ride their bikes anywhere, you know. This is why kids are stuck inside on X-Boxes or sitting around watching TV, because you can't even go outside anymore or parents cannot allow their kids to go out and ride their bikes or run up and down on the roads like we used to, because it just isn't safe.

Madam Speaker, as a former Minister I can tell you, and I know that the current Minister will have a challenge as well, because it is a cultural change. It is a mind-set change.

Madam Speaker, during my time we introduced the complete streets methodology or [rather] when building a new road we wanted to introduce complete streets methodology, but in the current roads which were built quite small at the time because they didn't think about it, we do what we call shared street methodology, but even just getting the engineers and the technocrats to understand and getting all people to understand that the streets are built for the movement of people.

The first roads were built for bicycles and donkeys then somebody brought in a car, they had to make the road a little bigger; then we brought in the bigger trucks and the roads had to get even bigger. You remember we had to get taller light poles to bring in taller vehicles? So over the years the need has grown and the culture has changed from the movement of people to building roads for vehicles and for vehicles to move quickly. Well, guess what? We got so many vehicles now that we can't even move quickly. We are sitting in traffic all the time and then when people are frustrated and they get on the side roads they hit the gas. We see it everywhere. It is a cultural thing.

From the beginning, from the onset when we build the roads, we have to build them for the safety of everyone using the road whether you are in a car, a truck, bicycle, skateboard or a donkey. It does not matter. You have to build a road for the movement of people, and no matter how those people are moving you have to protect them. And of course, Madam Speaker, I know that the mover of this Motion is a keen cyclist and we know that there is also the need for pedestrians and cyclists, and perhaps even those on horses and donkeys, to understand the road laws themselves and to be courteous when they are also using the road—riding your bicycle on the right side, walking on the right side, wearing bright clothing, wearing your helmet, et cetera. There has to be a cultural change and a holistic approach to this, across the board.

Madam Speaker, my own community, Washington Boulevard, or as we commonly refer to it, the Swamp: In the old days, when the roads were built it was a very tight community, but there were single families living in the homes. Many of those families have moved out and those homes that used to have three, maybe four people in the home have now been divided up and there may be eight people staying in that home.

We have multiplied and the population continues to multiply as people add on, which is a traditional thing for Caymanians to do—add on a few rooms. That is your pension, you rent those out and that is what you can retire on; but also people moving on, moving out and then dividing up the home to rent it out for long-term rentals and so the population has grown. The vehicles parked on the side of the street have become an issue because the house was not built to accommodate five or six people driving vehicles.

Madam Speaker, as we sat here this evening, as we sat here just a while ago, the third accident in two

months on Kennedy Drive in Washington Boulevard—a three-car pile-up this evening. How do you get a three-car pile-up in a very busy residential neighbourhood like that, you know? It is tight enough already.

You know, one of the issues we also have Madam Speaker, in particular in Washington Boulevard, and the Minister always says we may never ask him for anything but I will tell him this evening: We desperately need help there—and the people in Watler's Road desperately need help; but we have two other issues. Traffic calming measures such as sleeping policemen would be great in Washington Boulevard, but over the years in previous governments and times were tough, much chip and spray was used and you can't put road markings on chip and spray, so many of those roads do not have proper road markings for people to see.

I know the accident just about two weeks ago was an elderly man, another constituent of mine from Rock Hole. He was being a Good Samaritan giving someone a ride home from the hospital. He dropped her off and on his way out he didn't realise he had reached the main Washington Boulevard and drove straight into a truck and he was very, very fortunate that he didn't receive any major injuries, but there are no road markings. You can't even see the stop sign. There are no road markings on the ground. The lighting can be fairly poor when it is not a new moon or full moon.

Those are the issues, you know. We need, whether we just do the intersections at the moment out of asphalt that we can put down proper markings. Some of them may need the stop signs with the lights on it, and the very same thing in Watler's Road, Slate Drive, which is a very popular passage for people working in the Seven Mile Beach to go through. They have some repairs.

The same thing happened in Washington Boulevard by the way. Repairs by the utility companies and water companies and then once they patch back—if they patch back where they repaired—they don't put the markings and the lines back on the road. I rose to give some further examples, you know, of the challenges we all face and the cultural change that we need to see when we build our roads and in protecting all users of the roads, and I look forward to supporting this Motion.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Member for Savannah.

Ms. Heather D. Bodden: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I realise we were at the hour of just after 10p.m so I shall be brief as well.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support Private Member's Motion No. 11/2022-2023, Implementing traffic calming and safety measures along roads in Red Bay and Prospect Areas.

Member for Red Bay, I hear you. In Savannah, one of the fastest-growing communities, we are

suffering with the same issues on Shamrock road. The Member mentioned six schools in his area. In the Savannah community we have the Joanna Clarke Primary School and two infant schools; churches that accommodate afterschool programmes which many children attend.

Madam Speaker, my heart is in my mouth when I witness the reckless speeding on our roads and tell me where are they going? There is no reason for them to be traveling at such a speed. I am so afraid there will be a major accident one day. Almost daily we experience a bang-up in the Savannah area. It is beyond me that speeding continues at such an inconsiderate speed and to think, Madam Speaker, right in front of the Joanna Clarke Primary School there are flashing lights indicating that it is a school and you are to slow down. Not even those flashing lights slow some of the reckless drivers.

Madam Speaker, we also have a playfield on Pedro Castle Road, and that road is a racetrack. We placed signs so that it would slow the drivers down. We called the police and the speeding continues so I, too, am here begging for assistance that we have been asking for many years.

Madam Speaker, again, I am happy to support this Motion. I thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I promise I will make this very short because I see we still got much business to do and everybody said they don't want to be here until 2a.m. again.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support Private Member's Motion No. 11/2022-2023 — Implementing traffic calming and safety measures along roads in Red Bay and Prospect Areas.

Madam Speaker, hearing it, I think this Motion has expanded from Red Bay to Savannah to George Town North and now I hear Bodden Town West, so I assume then that everybody is in support of expanding the NRA budget at the same time, so we are happy to get it done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Now I am hearing the colleague for West Bay [West] saying the same thing.

It concerns me that we have to come here with a motion to talk about this, Madam Speaker; as the Member for George Town South said, this should be something that we see it and we just call it in and say, *look, it needs to be fixed*. I also understand what the Member for George Town South is talking about, that you have to get 75 per cent of the people in a lane to sign just to get a speed bump because I, myself, have

to do some walking just this week for a particular road in North Side where people have asked me about a speed bump.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I am very happy. As everybody knows, my door is always open to everybody including the Member for Red Bay, but he has never come to look for me yet, so, I am inviting him to come see me or I am coming to see him this week with my NRA team so that we can take a tour through the Red Bay and Prospect area

[Inaudible interjection and desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I am also going to bring with me my colleague the Minister of Health, so that they make sure that it is just roadworks we are talking about. At least I have some backup there.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I do agree with every single thing that everybody has said here and I do tell you, that I will definitely be looking into it because the last thing I want is that we were here talking about this tonight, and then hear that something has happened.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, no matter what, politics aside, everyone in here, they are all our people, we represent them all. Some may be on one side of the road, some on the other side but there are still our Caymanian people. So, just to make this short, I am 100 per cent in full support of this Motion and I look forward to our road tour along with my Chief Officer, my Deputy Chief Officer, the director of NRA and the board chairman, other board members and my colleagues. We will be bringing the full complement of people out to show that we take this very seriously.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Definitely. We will definitely make sure we bring the photographer, Member for Red Bay.

Madam Speaker, I put my support and I do know that my team at the NRA will definitely be supporting this also because they have talked a lot about traffic calming measures. I am just glad now that the Member reached out to us so that we could actually work together to solve the problems in his area. It took him a little while to find me, but he found me. He might not have wanted to, but he found me now.

As Member Hew said before, I have told him, *you don't tell me if you want anything done in the area,*

and I have always opened my arms to him and said, *look, Joey, I have mad respect for you, but you never tell me that you wanted anything done* so he listed it out again. What I want to tell you is that when our team is actually finished doing all of their research on what they have to do for the Prospect to Red Bay area— not to jam my next week up, but we will be extending our arms out to you to come to your constituency also, to take a look and do a drive through with you to see how we can fix your matters.

And Ms. Heather [elected Member for Savannah], I know you have been reaching out to us about this gully and Savannah—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Oh, boy. I opened a Pandora's Box now.

It looks like we are going to have to do an SPS for the NRA now. We will make sure that we get around to everybody to talk about these measures so that we can actually help, but it may not be only an NRA thing. It may be something that we have to look at in the Planning Laws of new subdivisions that are coming online also, how we can actually help mitigate some of those risks so that it is done upfront.

I thank you all.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Before I call on any other Member to speak, just a few housekeeping rules: I want to remind Members not to call individuals by their names and also for my personal preference I am asking Members to assume that your mics don't have lights, so if you want to speak just stand, and I will acknowledge you because I didn't see your Mic earlier Minister. Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

I will now call on the mover of the Motion to exercise your right of reply.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank all Members of the House whom have spoken for their support and not just support but enthusiastic support, and for those who haven't spoken for their tacit support. I thank the Member for George Town South for reminding me of this issue with which I have a big problem, this NRA policy of needing 75 per cent of the residents of a particular street to agree before they put in a traffic calming measure.

It's not in the regulations, it is not in the law, it's a practice; and I understand why, because many people object to having to go over speed bumps or even speed humps which are the gentler ones, but when we are talking about safety matters, matters which can literally mean the difference between life and death, we

can't ask whether or not somebody likes what we are doing.

If we are in charge of government and we are in charge of public safety and safety on the roads, we have got to do what is the right thing, otherwise government is arguably liable. So I really hope, Minister Ebanks, that the NRA can be persuaded that an objective assessment must be made for whether a traffic calming measure—whatever they plan to use, they are the experts not me or you—needs to be employed.

I'm sure that's what happened on High Rock Drive because we had two fatal accidents because the boys—well, actually, I didn't use to race up there but I used to go to watch the races up there. I saw two really bad accidents happen there, but they put in speed humps which I curse every day that I have to drive over them to get to my farm, but I understand why they are there. That's what has to be first and foremost in the minds of the NRA, not whether Mrs. Jones in House #3 on Prospect Drive is unhappy, but whether or not the children are safer as a result of those measures having been employed.

I don't really have much more to say about this, Madam Speaker, except again to thank Minister Ebanks for his kind offer of doing a tour of those two constituencies and collectively, the Minister of Health, the Prospect rep and I can perhaps assist in pointing out where we think certain things should happen. Both of us know the respective constituencies extremely well. As I said, I have lived there for more than 31 years so I didn't need to become a rep to know what is happening in there.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The question is:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that in order to ensure the safety of the roads in the Red Bay and Prospect communities, as a matter of urgency the Government do **CONSIDER** authorising and instructing the responsible agency or agencies to provide sidewalks in heavily travelled areas and suitable traffic calming measures, including speed humps as required generally, but especially along Selkirk Drive, Abbey Way and Marina Drive.

All those in favour please say Aye, those against no.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 11-2022/2023 passed.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, did I miss the opportunity for a division?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I'm just asking; if I have, I accept.

The Speaker: You have.

**Private Member's Motion No. 12/2022-2023
Requiring the introduction of school buses
for private schools**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Red Bay.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am tempted to say I am on a roll, but I am not quite so sure yet; one doesn't count as a roll.

Private Member's Motion No. 12/2022-2023, entitled "Requiring the introduction of school buses for private schools".

WHEREAS the issue of traffic and traffic delays, especially during the morning rush hour, continues to be a major concern to everyone in these Islands;

AND WHEREAS this House has debated the issue recently, and some Members of this House have held public meetings on the topic;

AND WHEREAS the Premier has recently noted his desire to remove up to 1,000 cars from the roads to help alleviate the traffic congestion;

AND WHEREAS during periods when schools are not in session, there is a noticeable reduction in traffic during the usual morning rush hours;

AND WHEREAS the June 2020 Report by a Committee on Vehicle Importation and Transportation included a recommendation to mandate private schools to purchase their own school buses for transporting students to school or utilise the services of private sector companies providing this service;

AND WHEREAS it is acknowledged by the experts that solving Cayman's traffic issues will require the use of communal means of transport, including car sharing, use of public transport and other means, such as the private schools providing busing options for their students;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that as a matter of urgency the Government **CONSIDER** mandating private schools to provide busing options for their students by either purchasing their own school buses or utilising the services of the private sector companies providing this service;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in furtherance of the foregoing resolution, the Government **CONSIDER** offering duty concession incentives to private schools if they seek to purchase their own buses.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder of the Motion? The Elected Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise to second Private Member's Motion number 12/2022-2023, a motion requiring the introduction of school buses for private schools.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker; I sure do.

Madam Speaker, we have had long, contentious but necessary debate in this House today, about this vexing problem of traffic congestion.

Madam Speaker, I also have in my hand a report from the Cayman Compass newspaper entitled *Special report: Rethinking Rush Hour, Sustainable solutions needed for traffic challenge* written by my friend James Whittaker, and quoting extensively from the former Minister of Public Transport, the Honourable Kenneth Bryan, in which article the following quote from him appears, **"I can't promise the people that this is going to have an immediate effect on traffic but I can promise that this government is going to try to fix this long-term problem that has been created by previous administrations, so that we can get long-term benefits in the future"**.

What he was speaking about is an improved public transport system, but he acknowledges right upfront that this is not a short-term fix. What we debated in this House for hours and almost caused the Premier to have an apoplectic fit, namely, the extension of the East West Arterial, is also not a short-term fix. Even if the Minister receives the necessary approvals and funding on Monday he won't, during this term, see that extension completed. I'm not guessing. You know how long we have been at Linford Pierson? Eight years plus two we have been battling with it.

Thus, we must, I believe, look at all of the means by which we can alleviate this congestion, all of them, but one which seems a relatively easy and quick fix to everybody who just pays attention and lives in Cayman, is requiring the private schools to do what the governments schools do, which is bus their students. It will remove thousands of cars off of those roads at that particular time. We don't have to guess about this. For years and years everybody says, *"Oh, you can always tell when school is out because it was an easy ride into Town this morning."*

I can say, Madam Speaker, that we had started that initiative just before COVID. We started having the discussions with some of the private schools—I cannot tell you they were enthusiastic about it, not the ones that I spoke to, including my own sister who runs the biggest private school in Cayman, because they worry about costs and they worry about what their parents, as they call them, the parents of their students are going to say because nobody wishes to be inconvenienced.

That's the thing with Cayman. *"No, sir, I must have it my way. Everybody else must do what is necessary but not me, because this is the only time of the day I have with my child. I need to have that half an hour, 40 minutes, whatever it is, while I am driving the child to school"*; but Madam Speaker, we have, I believe, not me anymore because I am not in charge of anything, but the government needs to have that difficult conversation with the private schools.

I had gone so far in my earlier discussions with them to even suggest to my colleagues, when I was Premier, that even if the government had to pay for the busing of private school students we should do so, because of the overall benefit to the public, to all of us, by taking those many cars off the road at that particular time.

It is the end of April. We have time now, I believe, to have the schools gear up for the beginning of the next school year. They don't have to go buy buses. There are *[counting]* 1,2,3,4 — at least four companies that provide this service. If you give them three months' notice they will have buses here ready to roll. Some of the private schools already utilise them for field trips and so forth. It's an easy fix. Easy in the sense that we know if we do it some of the people goin' be difficult about it, but we just pass the necessary legislation, that's what we are here for.

We nearly killed the Premier just now because we are not doing something that we need to do because it is taking so long. This one can be fixed easily, Madam Speaker, so I am not going to make a big long talk about it. Of all of the solutions that we have seen, it is the one that can be most swiftly and cheaply implemented and give a huge bang for the government buck. As a Parliament I hope, I pray, I entreat you all, to support this and then for the Cabinet to take it forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Government to lend our support to this Motion seeking the consideration. As the Honourable Member for Red Bay did intimate, under the last government we did engage in these negotiations and I think it was almost an understatement to say that it didn't go quite well. In fact, they vigorously defended, so from a voluntary basis, unless the leaders of the schools and the parents of the students have drastically changed, we are probably going to get the same reception.

This time it has been upped a bit because I think the Honourable Member does recollect and recognise that they will not be "voluntold", that it will have to be from a statutory perspective. So as the Honourable Minister for PAHI invited him to do road tours, I guess it would be remiss of me not to invite him to

utilise his negotiation skills and affinity associations as we try to engage in first of all, a consultative process to see if we can bring them on board.

It would be much easier for the public schools subject to the requisite financing, because from a majority perspective, most of our public schools do bus our children, but there are still some that do not bus for the same reasons as were indicated. Some parents see it as quality time with their children and sometimes the only time that they get to spend with their children, to and from the schools; but I think it's a necessary goal, especially on Grand Cayman where there is quite a bit of traffic woes.

If this could assist, the Government is certainly willing to investigate and consider it and I look forward to the appropriate financing, because I do not have it within my existing allocations.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I want to support this Motion, I just have a query.

Some private schools have great difficulty in financing and have to look to government to supplement their budgets, so what I would seek to find out is, while we would offer a concession, the first thing is you gah' be able to buy it. So if we mandate this, what would we consider offering them to help them purchase, because definitely some of the private schools, as I said, are looking to government to supplement their budgets for different things that they do need.

I certainly want to support the Motion and will support the Motion, you know, but I would like to hear, if they can't and we mandate it, then what's going to happen.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, as the seconder of the Motion, I obviously would like to lend my support to the Motion and say that I think perhaps we can start the conversation with the possibility of sharing the public school buses.

As a young man growing up in North West Point, I rode the school bus to Walkers Road; there was a gate between Cayman Prep School (where Cayman Prep High is now was the primary school) and John Gray High School, so I would exit the John Gray High School buses, and walk through the gate to Cayman Prep.

In instances like Walkers Road, there could be possibilities for John Gray, Cayman Prep and St. Ignatius Catholic School students coming from outside George Town to share the public school bus services—and maybe the buses can then move on to Triple C.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? I will now call on the mover of the Motion to exercise his right of reply.

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, Madam Speaker, I wish to thank the Minister speaking on behalf of the Government for her ready endorsement of the Motion noting as she has, the difficulties that we know this is going to involve in terms of negotiating with the schools.

To the point raised by the Member for West Bay West, I did say that when we had the discussions during our administration, I said to my colleagues that I believe that the national good that this will do warrants Government even paying for the service if it comes to that because as I said, I — and not just me, none of us — could think of any other single measure that would reduce in one fell swoop that number of vehicles from the roads during the customary rush hours, particularly in the morning.

If that is what is necessary, I doubt that there are going to be many people in the country who would think it's a bad idea, as I say, except those who feel that they are being inconvenienced because they can't drive their kids to school but as has been noted in another debate in this House just this week, we know of many, many, instances where families of children who go to private school buy a car, a Honda Fit or something for their helper or nanny or whatever they call her, to drive their children to and from school. That is another set of cars on the road that otherwise might not be necessary.

Hence, Madam Speaker, I am happy for the support. I will listen anxiously to hear public utterances by my good friend, the Deputy Premier and Minister for Education in due course. Starting on Monday will monitor all the airwaves and all of the platforms— social media and otherwise.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The question is: **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that as a matter of urgency the Government CONSIDER mandating private schools to provide busing options for their students by either purchasing their own school buses or utilising the services of the private sector companies providing this service;**

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in furtherance of the foregoing resolution, the Government CONSIDER offering duty concession incentives to private schools if they seek to purchase their own buses.

All those in favour, please say Aye, those against no.

AYES.

The Speaker: the Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 12-2022/2023 passed.

**Private Member's Motion No. 13/2022-2023
Motion on free health care for children
and seniors**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 13- 2022/2023— free health care for children and seniors, standing in my name. The Motion reads as follows, Madam Speaker:

WHEREAS Section 17 of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 calls for the Protection of Children;

AND WHEREAS Section 17 (1) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 requires the Legislature to enact laws to provide every child and young person under the age of eighteen with such facilities as would aid their growth and development;

AND WHEREAS Section 17 (1) (c) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 requires the Legislature to ensure that every child has the right to basic health care services;

AND WHEREAS Section 17 (2) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 requires the Legislature to proceed on the basis that a child's best interest are of paramount importance;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Constitution affirms our commitment to being a country that provides a comprehensive healthcare system;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Constitution affirms our commitment to being a country committed to the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for children by 1st September, 2024;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 70 by 1st July 2024;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 68 by 1st July 2025.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder? The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I beg to second Private Member's Motion No. 13.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded, and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Most definitely, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the book of Ezekiel teaches us, "*Woe be unto the shepherd that feeds himself and not the flock. Should the shepherd not feed the flock?*"

Madam Speaker, the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as "*A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*"

On its website, the WHO says that they are firmly committed to the principles set out in the preamble of their Constitution. Those principles say:

"The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic, or social condition"; it goes on to say, Madam Speaker:

"The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and states". It also says Madam Speaker:

"The achievement of any state in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all".

Another principle is, Madam Speaker, "**Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of diseases, especially communicable disease, is a common danger";**

"Healthy development of the child is of basic importance; the ability to live harmoniously in a changing total environment is essential to such development";

"The extension to all peoples of the benefits of medical, psychological and related knowledge is essential to the fullest attainment of health";

"Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance and the improvement of the health of the people."

Madam Speaker, it goes on to say, "**Governments have a responsibility for the health of their peoples which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures".**

Madam Speaker, the principles I outlined were first drafted in 1946 and approved in 1948 so as you can see it is not new; it is something that has been around for many, many, decades.

Madam Speaker, the WHO has also stated that "**Achieving universal health care (UHC) is a WHO strategic priority, with a goal of one billion more people benefiting from universal health coverage by 2025.**". For ease of reference, Madam Speaker, the WHO says that "**Universal Health Coverage (UHC) means that all people have access to the full range**

of quality health services they need when and where they need them without financial hardship. It covers the full continuum of essential health services from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care”.

Madam Speaker, the WHO goes on to say that **“every country has a different path to achieving UHC and deciding what to cover based on the needs of their people and the resources at hand. However, the importance of access to health services and information as a basic human right is universal. To make health for all a reality, all people must have access to high quality services for their health and the health of their families and communities. To do so, skilled health workers providing quality, people-centred care; and policy-makers committed to investing in universal health coverage are essential.”**

Madam Speaker, the WHO website also goes on to say **“Universal health coverage requires strong, people-centred primary health care. Good health systems are rooted in the communities they serve. They focus not only on preventing and treating disease and illness, but also on helping to improve well-being and quality of life.”**

Madam Speaker, free or universal healthcare, which provides access to health services and medical treatment without financial barriers, can bring several benefits including:

- Improved health outcomes by allowing individuals to seek medical attention and treatment earlier, which can prevent more serious illnesses and help manage chronic conditions;
- Reduced financial burden on individuals and families who may otherwise struggle to afford medical care. This can lead to reduction in medical debt and bankruptcy caused by medical expenses;
- Greater equity by helping to reduce disparities by ensuring that everyone, regardless of their income or social status, has access to the same quality of health care;
- Increased productivity— when people have access to free healthcare, they are more likely to seek preventive care and manage their health, which can lead to fewer sick days and greater productivity; and
- Improved public health by reducing the spread of infectious diseases and other illnesses, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Overall, Madam Speaker, free health care can be an important tool for promoting health, equity, and improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

Madam Speaker, here we are in 2023, one of the largest offshore financial centres in the world with over \$1 billion in income and we are now debating to

return to something that many of us in this honourable House grew up with, namely, free health care for our children. This is something that I remember having when I was young and I am sure that many of you, if not all of you, should have been old enough to remember when you could have gone down to the George Town Hospital or whichever district clinic and receive free health care. We did that when we didn't have much, Madam Speaker, but we did that when we recognised that we were a caring community and we recognised that we all have one life, one body, and we have to take care of it— we did that.

The shocking part, Madam Speaker, is that it is something that was taken away from our people. I am sure back then the decision makers would have had a reason when they were doing it; maybe it was an oversight, but nonetheless it is now something incumbent on us to fix, something for us to put back— free health care for our Caymanian children.

Madam Speaker, just this morning I received a message from a constituent, and maybe I should have pulled this before I started, but in a nutshell, what really jumped out was when the parent said to me— and she probably will kill me for reading it out but that's fine. She said, *“Health insurance is among my top five monthly expenses; mortgage \$2,400, house insurance, \$800, CUC \$650, health insurance for one person \$600, car loan \$400.”*

She goes on to say, that once her daughter turns a certain age— and I will leave that out to protect her identity— she basically has to go out and find \$900 a month to get insurance coverage for her child. The reason I mentioned that, Madam Speaker, is that for different reasons that I won't get into that child is one that has to stay at home and in this environment there is no way, no way, Madam Speaker that that mother, a single mother at that, would be able to take care of her child if something was to go wrong; if God forbid something happens.

You know, Madam Speaker, when I look at the last census... And again, I want to thank the ESO team and the thousands of Caymanians, residents, and everyone who calls the Cayman Islands home that took time out to participate in this census exercise; something that we only do basically once every 10 years. It shows that we do have an issue when it comes to illness, disability and health insurance.

I will not go into all of this because it is a public document, but when we look at the medically diagnosed illnesses, Madam Speaker, and we look at the top three which are diabetes, arthritis and cataract, when we look at the prevalence rate between male and females, just to put it in context, Madam Speaker, the overall prevalence rate for diabetes was 46.3 per 1000. Simply put, Madam Speaker, if you put 1000 people in a room in Cayman 46.3 (I don't know that you can get a .3 person but you know...) 46 of them would have issues with diabetes.

Equally with arthritis, Madam Speaker. If you put 1000 people in a room, 22 of them would have arthritis, and if you put 1000 people in a room 20 of them would have arthritis; but then, Madam Speaker, even though that is an overall number, when you look at the disparity between male and female what really jumped out to me is that females had a higher number than the males per 1000. In the case of arthritis, 12.5 men versus 32.3 women; cataract, 18.6 men versus 21.7 women; diabetes, 41.6 men versus 51 women.

The reason I touched on that, Madam Speaker, is that when we look at our mortality we realise that on average women are actually living I think maybe four years more than men or thereabouts. Our women are living longer but as you can see from the census, they are also having greater issues in terms of medical diagnosis.

Equally, Madam Speaker, what is even scarier, looking at the census number is when we break it up between Caymanian versus non-Caymanian and we consider that we have many people from all over the world who come here, I couldn't help but notice that in every single category, although I do recognise that within our work permit system, we only basically bring in healthy people; but at least it gives us a kind of snapshot in terms of the people who are coming here to work or the non-Caymanian population, how they actually compare to the Caymanian population.

To put that in context, Madam Speaker, in terms of diabetes, even though there is an overall rate of 46.3, when you look at the actual Caymanian number, it is actually 66.7 versus the non-Caymanian number of 23. So, in essence, it is more than double the rate, in terms of the non-Caymanians. In a nutshell, Madam Speaker, if you were to put 1000 people in a room, even though the overall rate may be 46, if you break it up between Caymanian versus non-Caymanian, then you are going to find out that 66.7 of the Caymanians would have diabetes issues versus 23 non-Caymanians. Equally with arthritis, Madam Speaker— we have 36.1 for Caymanian versus 6.5 non-Caymanian; and in terms of cataracts, 28.2 for Caymanian versus 10.9 for non-Caymanian.

I am also cognisant, Madam Speaker, that as we look at the distribution of the ages within our population, that the majority of the older population are Caymanians, so naturally, this number would be distorted because most of the people who we are bringing in are pretty much young, they are in their more productive years and we would not basically be bringing in many senior citizens to work compared to elsewhere, so it would be somewhat skewed when you look at the age population, et cetera.

That was something that came out of the overall SPS, Madam Speaker, that when we start looking at our own metrics, they can look positive as though they are world standard or best-in-class standards, but when we separate the population between Caymanian versus non-Caymanian— and we saw that with the

dependency ratio, where we have an overall rate of roughly 33-34 per cent, but when we take out the non-Caymanian population, we find ourselves with a dependency ratio of more than 50 per cent which is one of the highest in the world.

Thus, Madam Speaker, when we sit down, and recognise that we have people who are living longer but in these cases we do recognise that when you do see some of the top three issues that we have here, you realise two things:

1. It is a lifestyle issue; and
2. It shows certain weaknesses within our insurance product.

Because if you look for example, Madam Speaker, at the basic SHICK plan and the number of doctor visits that you get et cetera, you take something like vision which is not covered, you realise that there is a cataract issue, and then we look at the times people are allowed certain amount of visits to the doctor. You use one, two visits for the year there is a very strong possibility that you can actually miss being diagnosed with diabetes or whatever and by the time you go back, you may find yourself probably a type-2 or closer to pre-diabetic.

The point I am making, Madam Speaker, is that we need to find a way to invest more in our people and as I said yesterday during the SPS, somethings that really jumped out to me, whether we want to accept it or not, as it stands right now, the public purse is already taking the burden of most, if not all of the sick people in this country, because one of the best health care plans you can have in this country, Madam Speaker, is actually being indigent. Once you have that, you pretty much have a blank cheque from the government.

I mean, we see the numbers. By now everyone inside here is familiar NGS 55 where, no matter what your budget, that number gets exceeded every year and it's a number that you cannot predict, and this is where we need to sit down now, Madam Speaker, and start making the necessary structural changes to our economy, in terms of future proofing Cayman. What do we want it to look like?

I recognise that it is not something that we can do immediately; it is definitely going to require work from both CINICO, and the private health insurance [companies] and it's going to require getting data from the different hospitals around the Island to see exactly how we can finally get this to be managed; but one thing is clear, Madam Speaker: leaving it as is, or business as usual, is not an option. At some point, if we inside this House recognise that health care itself is a basic human right, it is something that every person should have, then we need to find a way that once it's a right, just like any other right, then we have to find a way to make it accessible to everyone.

That is basically what the WHO said from back in the late 1940s, and it is something that we need to grapple with at one point in our history, Madam

Speaker. Again, I can speak for when I was young and could go to the hospital and get free healthcare services. I don't know what it was like for the seniors back then; I don't know if it was the case, but I do not recall seeing cases where people had issues going to the hospital.

Madam Speaker, something that I can tell you from personal experience: I have elderly constituents that when they had to be air-ambulated out of the country in the 80s and 90s the family couldn't afford it, and the government actually took liens on their homes. I had a constituent who sadly passed away last year or the year before, and I think that government still had around \$60,000 balance on their home, and one of the things that the person was stressed about before their passing was, once they passed would the government come and take their house and — basically where would his elderly wife stay.

I mean, these are things, Madam Speaker, that I am hoping that by the time we get around to budget time, the government would have at least start looking at many of those people who have medical debts from overseas going back 10, 15, 20 years, that we still have liens on their homes, et cetera and send them a letter just to say, you know what, we are writing it off, because at this age and stage they are not going to pay it, but many of them are old, they are elderly and in their pride they still want to pay \$25, \$50 a month or whatever they can afford.

However, either way we cannot get up in this day and age, when we do recognise that our people are living longer and we do recognise that the public purse is already taking a strain as it is. I use an example, Madam Speaker, when we looked at a CIMA report and we compared it to a CINICO report, where in one year the total domestic premiums were \$286 million or thereabouts and of that amount CINICO was \$102 million for 15,100 customers, and the private sector was almost 184 million for 50,000 people.

I mean, clearly, we already see it and everyone inside this House knows that the civil service and civil service pensioners are actually subsidizing retirees from the private sector, so whether you want to accept it or not, Madam Speaker, we find ourselves in a situation right now where most people would have worked in the private sector from 16 to 65— 49 years of their life— and when they retire, very few companies offer post-retirement healthcare benefits, and in some cases when they do have to stay on, or have the option to stay on, we are talking about premiums anywhere from \$1,300 to \$1,600 a month. When you factor in that the actual pension withdrawal is \$1,200 a month or thereabouts, in some cases you can't even afford to pay your health insurance.

These are the kinds of things that are keeping many families awake. It is something that I am sure every one of us inside here has dealt with— and there will be no silver bullet, no magic bullet, it is not going to be a one size fits all, it is not going to happen overnight;

but what I am certain of, Madam Speaker, is that within this country and within this honourable House, we have the natural expertise. We have people who are very smart, people who are brilliant and we can find a way to figure it out.

We have a population that can literally fit in some stadiums in the United States, Madam Speaker. Some of the problems that we have, we should not be having, and if we cannot sit down in this House and figure out what we need to do for 80,000 people with the expertise that we have and the smartness that we have among our population, then we have a problem.

Madam Speaker, I have put in enough time. I know that work already started because I know CINICO is looking to expand some of the offerings in their products, so I think we have given enough time in which we can probably start and also at the point of looking at phasing some things in too, especially for the seniors; so rather than going full-hog one go, we start with those Caymanians above the age of 70, and then maybe a year or later we look at Caymanians about the age of 68.

It could even be a situation where it could be a little higher, or a little lower once we look at the age distribution, and see exactly how we want to cover the population, but more than likely, Madam Speaker, I am willing to bet that most of the people who we are talking about covering, are people who were probably already taken care of anyway, but something that would make a big difference is if we actually insure them, as opposed to running a blank check, at least at some point, reinsurance can kick in and we can cap our losses. I think currently CINICO uses, a \$600,000 limit and anything above that the reinsurance kicks in; but once we have insurance for the people, at least we know what our cap is, and then above that the reinsurance can kick in, as opposed to going through this situation that we have with NGS 55 every year, where you just have to guess what the number is going to be and you don't know who is getting sick, you don't know who is going to Needs Assessment Unit (NAU), you don't know who is becoming indigent. We have seen many people who had the resources, but some of the issues that people are dealing with— cancer and the more expensive [illnesses] they just can't afford it and in some cases, once they get sick, their entire savings are gone and they are literally bankrupt. It is something that keeps many people awake at night so it is something that I want the government to consider.

I will close right there and I will thank Members in advance for moving this forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I will try to be as quickly as I can, understanding that the night is drawing on again. I am quite sure we

will probably be doing breakfast here again; but I rise to comment on this Motion brought forward by the Elected Member for Bodden Town West and seconded by the Elected Member for West Bay West. It is said that there is no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children and I would, by extension, add seniors to that sentiment, as both groups have particular needs and vulnerabilities which we, as a Government and as a society, must make every effort to meet and mitigate.

Madam Speaker, as a people driven PACT Administration, and as the Minister of Health and Wellness, it goes without saying that I fully support the philosophy of ensuring that everyone in the Cayman Islands can access affordable, quality, healthcare. This is particularly true for children and the elderly, and it is our shared philosophy that a fair amount of healthcare is already provided to a large number of people in both groups at no cost. Ensuring that quality healthcare is accessible and affordable, all for all, is definitely a priority for my Ministry and for this Government.

Madam Speaker, it is impossible to talk about improvement of quality of life without talking about wellness. Let me reflect: Two years ago, I stood right here and stated that an underlying principle of how we would formulate policy and make decisions going forward would be utilising data, statistics, analysis and insights. Madam Speaker, today I am exceptionally happy to state that work is underway to help us do just that.

Presently, the Ministry of Health and Wellness' team is working diligently to launch the STEPS National Health Survey 2023. We are going through the various districts informing and educating constituents and the people of this country on exactly what it means, and we are looking for their participation getting a sampling of 3,300 Caymanians and residents within the community.

The STEPS survey will allow us to gather much needed data on the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension within our Islands, as well as risk factors of non-communicable diseases. Madam Speaker, this data will be utilised to inform not only policy decisions, but also public health programmes. The survey will also provide insights into the groups within our population currently most impacted by non-communicable diseases, allowing us to tailor healthcare interventions to meet their very needs. The survey will also assist us in understanding the current barriers of healthcare, particularly preventative care, and how those barriers can be mitigated.

Madam Speaker, I would like to share that the STEPS 2023 offers us the possibility to also calculate future projections of healthcare burden that non-communicable diseases will create in years to come, by using the prevalence of risk factors in the current population. This data will serve us for years to come, and it will also allow us to take meaningful action that will definitely change lives. It is for this reason that, while at face value this Private Member's Motion appears to be a good one, I would like to offer some rational

observations on it and where I believe we need just a bit more clarity before what is being asked can be added or decided on, especially in light of the 2024/2025 deadlines contained therein.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by noting that from what I'm seeing there is no clear definition of what is really meant by the *free basic health care* included in the Motion. Without a clear definition of what exactly this encompasses, especially within the context of our Islands, it becomes rather complex to quantify both the true cost and the actual benefit to the community, understanding that there are a number of services currently being offered that are free of cost. I will share further on. You see, Madam Speaker, if the definition of free basic healthcare refers to primary health care, then I can say that the Government already provides a wide range of free public health services via the Health Services Authority (HSA) that central government pays to HSA as an output, and this is provided to the uninsured and the underinsured.

Parliament should be reminded, Madam Speaker, that the Health Insurance Act, in section 5, requires compulsory health insurance and this requirement extends to children. This would mean that children in middle income and affluent families are already covered by private insurance providers. As the Motion speaks only to children, it therefore implies that Government should bear the cost of services for *all children* independently of whether or not their families can provide for them. Would it be rational, Madam Speaker, for the government to bear such a cost for those for whom it is not needed, in addition to the requirement for resident children to be compulsory insured?

There are three annual output agreements between the Ministry and the HSA, as I stated earlier, to provide primary healthcare services at our district centres which include child health services and immunizations, medical care beyond insurance coverage and uninsured, and school health services including health education, screening, immunizations and routine dental care.

Madam Speaker, the Health Services Fees Act addresses free services at HSA. Specifically, section 5 addresses school children and states that "**Subject to section 10, fees are not payable in respect of a patient at a health care facility if the patient has not attained the upper limit of school age as defined in the Education Law (1999 Revision).**" Madam Speaker, section 9 of the same Act speaks to free treatment for different groups— that includes children and seniors alike.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to our seniors, no one knows it better than me. My grandmother was a long-term dialysis patient; her husband, my grandfather, was a seaman and thank God for the Seafarers Association and their services there, again funded by government. My mother, a civil servant, died at 45 with leukaemia and I can tell you [about] when we say underinsured, or your insurance has ended. The service

that my mother received prior to her passing, trust me, I cannot be more grateful for what is already in place. Now, whether it comes with a cost, I feel it is been covered here; we are seeing the true numbers. Thanks to COVID we have seen the cost of healthcare go up but right now, when it comes to our seniors, government pays the cost of health care provided to many of our seniors via the underinsured programme, the medical indigent programme and a healthcare programme, again, through seafarers. I see it working for myself.

In fact, government budget includes 26— let me repeat this: Government budget includes 26 line items that speak to the provision of health services for children, seniors, and other vulnerable groups totalling \$104 million which does not include NGS 55, which is our indigent care budget that ranges between \$25 and \$40 million annually. Those numbers are huge, Madam Speaker, that is why the Ministry focuses on preventative care; but until we get there, we have to do the sampling to see exactly where the problems are.

This brings me to the second point, Madam Speaker: The potential cost to government in implementing this Motion at this time. Assuming the Motion is only in reference to Caymanians, and does not include coverage already covered by the government, implementation of the Private Member's Motion which speaks to providing free health care for children by the 1st of September 2024; seniors above the age of 70 by the 1st of July 2024; and seniors above the age of 68 by the 1st of July 2025 would result in an increased operating cost for the Government by \$1.7 million in 2024, \$5 million in 2025, and a minimum annual increase of \$5.4 million for 2026 onwards assuming coverage is provided to all individual in the age groups specified.

Implementing this Motion at this very time would cause the Cayman Islands Government and all matters remaining unchanged for expenditure and revenue projected levels for 2023 to 2026 to have serious difficulties with the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility. At this juncture it is also important to note, that while this may be a way to calculate the cost of providing those persons with free health insurance coverage, it is not necessarily reflective of the cost of providing those persons with free health care services. Free health care services now, would cost significantly more than what is being presented as the estimated cost over the premiums as opposed to services, especially for our seniors, Madam Speaker.

Speaking of seniors, Madam Speaker, I note that the age threshold for seniors as defined in this Motion needs clarification. It would be useful to have a better understanding as to why reference is being made to seniors above the age of 70 and seniors above the age of 68 when the definition of senior as provided under the Older Persons Act of 2017 is a person over the age of 65 years.

In summary, Madam Speaker, the Government currently spends approximately \$130 to \$150 million annually on health care. The Government also has

laws and policies in place to ensure that primary health care is available and accessible to our citizens and residents. Clarity is needed, Madam Speaker, to determine what gap this Motion intends to address, as this is difficult to ascertain without clear definition of free health care services. The thought process of excluding some seniors from the Motion per the definition as established by the Older Persons Act of 2017 is also warranted. The spirit of the Motion appears to be a good one, Madam Speaker, however, we will need careful analysis to ensure that we are providing a right size solution.

My proposal would be to analyse the situation and come back to the Parliament with an update after a thorough and comprehensive analysis to determine what services are missing. Our need to be included would be what the true cost of providing these services for free to individuals would be to the Government; confirming the eligibility requirements for the free services; and recommendations to what changes need to be made for children and for seniors to ensure that any expanded offerings are sustainable not only for now, but for generations to come, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, by no means am I against the essence of the Motion. Many households out there have one life-saving medication prescription being filled because their insurance has run out. We have persons who can't even afford getting insurance and are choosing fasting, alternate means, instead of going to the hospital to even get checked out— and this is why we are ramping up our public health services which, as I stated, is a free of cost service that the Ministry of Health purchased from the HSA to get them caught, and this is why the STEM Survey 2023 is imperative. We need the culture to shift. I don't want my people to be at home and ashamed to go to the HSA if they are not feeling well because they are either unemployed or uninsured.

It's not who we are; we have a constitutional remit to take care of our people. I just want us, Madam Speaker, those of us who are elected to this honourable House, to remember the burden of balancing our goals, our aspirations, and the dreams that we have for Cayman and our people, with fiscal responsibility and realities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, as the seconder of this Motion I rise to, of course, offer my support to it. I have listened to the Minister, and of course the mover, and of course I know what the Motion is and I appreciate the Minister's grasp of the whole subject matter. I just want to offer some observations as a representative who I know, is well in tune not just with people in my constituency, but people from all over this Island who contact me and come to my office.

Firstly, Madam Speaker, I think we have a sizeable population of people over the age of 65. I have had many people come to me and ask if I can offer them some assistance, as they are told they have to pay for their health care. Now, I know that there are some getting free health care through CINICO, which is given for a time; I also know how many times seniors try to get health care through NAU and have to wait months to get assistance meaning, Madam Speaker, that they put in an application to NAU which I think deals through CINICO, therefore, they can't get their health care, but that takes a long time. As I said, months some time.

It's when persistent MPs like myself continue calling, calling, calling—and Madam Speaker, I know you go through the same thing in trying to assist our people; and these are seniors, and remember that some of them might be getting some monthly stipend from government. Might be, I said. Some of them are certainly not in position to hold jobs, and some of them nobody is offering after they get to 65, 66, and 70. So, Madam Speaker, there is an area where seniors can be better assisted. There is an area that has to be addressed, because far too many and too often... and I guess it is just the load that NAU has to deal with, so there is an area that needs attention.

I am cognisant, Madam Speaker, of the cost. We heard what the Minister said and I know that our health bill is not a small one, it is not. As I said, I know how many people, how many seniors, women and men, mostly women, are calling upon us to assist them, so I'm cognisant of the cost factor and all this brings to bear the point of needing more revenue as we seek to assist the need to assist our people.

Budget is huge. Projections are huge for revenue, but the calls on that revenue are big too from all that I see, all that I hear, all that we want, and all that the people expect, because believe you me, people are expecting that the government will assist them and you hear plenty of them, women and men, saying, "*I worked in the tourism industry. I put in my time, I helped build this country, and you mean to tell me that they take a whole year and can't answer me?*" or —that's another thing they say, "*I can't get any help and I don't have any income*".

These are things that we meet daily. Daily, people are coming to our offices and knocking on our doors trying to get help. Madam Speaker, there are areas; there are areas, and I know that the Minister of Social Development has his hands full. He himself deals and talks to people who are seeking assistance, seeking medical help, medical attention, needing CINICO insurance to be able to get the health care because they do not have the money.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I'm really appreciative and I am glad to hear of the public health initiative because

that is one area that I believe our hospital needs to focus on. I believe that they need to focus on that.

Maybe leave some of the other specialist and expensive care to the private sector, because I am sure the private sector might get it that they might be able to pay for it cheaper themselves. That is not saying though, that the patient is going to get it any cheaper. I am not saying that, because I don't know, I see some of the cost factors there too; but leave some of it. I am very appreciative of the Minister. I think she spoke about it, but I also read something about there is this initiative for public health.

Madam Speaker, I don't need to go on. I know as we get older our health can deteriorate faster than you think. I felt bad on a Thursday, never paid attention to it. Friday was my birthday. I didn't do anything. Saturday I had a funeral to attend and a meeting after that, and then Sunday I had another funeral and I couldn't go to the cemetery, I just felt so bad by the time I could get home, I knew I was having cardiac problems. I didn't do anything; I just said, *Lord, if you are going to take me, take me, but I ain't going to the hospital tonight*; but early next morning, the holiday, National Heroes Day, I was in Health City's emergency until late that night. Yes, I was 14.4 and they count 15 as heart failure.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: And during all of that, Madam Speaker, they found Gallstones and then after that, a spinal situation that I was having for about four years and didn't pay any attention to just completely gave out on me and I just have to use that so as we get older—and I'm 68 years old—as we get older, one thing leads to another sometimes and that was something I paid attention to from my earliest days in this Legislative Assembly, this Parliament.

I paid attention to the seniors of this country because we have gone from sending them overseas and they died and government under Ezzard Miller refused to bring them back and we had to straighten that out. If the government send them there and they died we had to make sure that they got back here. All sorts of situations with seniors to the extent that when I came here, we were giving them \$25 and that depended on who they voted for and who they liked and then it went from that, to where we are giving them \$950.

I think most seamen, veterans, and some seniors are getting \$950, and that still cannot make ends meet today, so the bill is huge, no two ways about it, but there are areas the mover is addressing that I think have to be looked at. They have to be looked at because I know how often people try to get—and as I said, it might be the sheer numbers that need and NAU trying to assist, but it is many people, so let's not be too quick to say that the age group is something that we are not understanding.

I think what we are seeing here is that the older ones we deal with first, and even if it's only by two years, it's still giving Government some time for a year later; so it's giving government some time, and we are going to have to look at it on our budget of a billion dollars.

The Speaker: Thank you Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will speak briefly.

Madam Speaker, when we met and discussed this Private Member's Motion our reaction and conclusion was that we would support it, and Madam Speaker, as we read through it, what we see, I think, is a genuine attempt by the Member to address what we perceive is a looming and very critical issue that the country must face, namely, the whole issue of medical care for our elderly.

Personally, I'm not that concerned about the children population because I believe by and large they are covered, but the issue that we face is the ageing population and people who are retired and either cannot afford insurance, or the only thing they are able to acquire is the SHICK policy that is available and more than one time, more than once, I have seen families basically wiped out because of serious illnesses and the lack of insurance coverage and resources with which to buy such health care.

Madam Speaker, like everyone mentioned, I know it's going to cost. I know it is going to cost many millions of dollars but I would suggest, Madam Speaker that we need to start somewhere; begin to seek to identify the solution and help to provide it for our elderly. Otherwise, Madam Speaker... I think we owe it to them. The Member came up with a staggered way of doing it that might not be the right answer. We could perceptibly need to look at implementing it over a longer time period, you know, but we got to start somewhere. That is the thrust, I think, in my debate contribution here: Let us not ignore it.

I know that sometimes there are issues even accessing health care at the hospital. I know because constituents have called me, Minister. They will go and they are told when they go there for care, that they are expected to pay for it; they don't have the money and then they are not able to see a doctor and then they come to me and I have to call. Then I will call a senior member of the hospital and he says, "*Oh no, no, no, we have funding for this sort of situation. Tell them to go back and go to this person.*"

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: And my goodness, they could still go days without being able to get the care that they need.

If they would simply do what they should do, I think, at the very outset, some of these things would not be the problems that they are; but it is an issue, I know it, and I think we need to impress upon them the importance if there is funding for a specific type of coverage, whatever it is for aged people or let them know when they go and don't send them away. That to me is just wrong, and I think if we did a better job of making people aware of all that is available because I can tell you, when I listened to the Minister, and I had four years as Minister of Finance, I didn't know they had all those appropriations for all of these various costs, you know, for assistance that is available to people who don't have the means.

I see these issues: one is the access to it. I also think that as a country, what is being attempted to do with this, we are trying to address the long term issue of an ageing population. I would encourage everybody: get a copy of that census and go in there. What you will see is that tidal wave that is coming, because we are moving into an increased period of an ageing population and you are going to have a large group of people who need expensive health care and you are going to have a smaller population behind it who has to pick up the cost of paying for it all. Okay?

I honestly encourage the Government not to ignore it and my colleagues here, we are going to support it because I think it's that important, and I understand the basis for the Motion. He might not have gotten everything right, but I think that it still could be salvaged.

I appreciate what you all have said. It's a great debate and I know it's going to be extremely costly, but I don't think it is an issue that we can continue to ignore as a country. I believe it is critical for us. I mentioned it in my contribution to the SPS, it's a huge issue that we face. That's what I have to contribute to the debate on this Motion, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other—the Honourable Minister for Financial Services and Social Development?

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Social Development: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to contribute to this, I think very valuable, discussion; to pick up on the point where the Leader of the Opposition left off, we, just in the last few months, completed Older Persons' Month and we also completed in March, Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) 60th Anniversary and the population numbers, in terms of our ageing population, is frightening. There is going to be a range of issues that we are going to have to grapple with in order to assist that population, so I don't think that there is any doubt that the issue that this Motion raised is valid. I think it's a

question of how much can be done within the time frame proposed in the Motion.

For example, picking up on the point that the Member for West Bay West made in terms of CINICO— indigent coverage. It's not just an NAU issue; as a matter of fact, NAU is not even mentioned in the Health Insurance Act. All that has occurred, is that at the time it was written, the definition of 'indigent' and 'indigent medical care' in the definition of the Health Insurance Act is at a time where DCFS was the only department and since they have been split from NAU, NAU is just the processor of the application to assist in determining the person's financial viability— it is all they do.

It then moved over to HSA to assist in analysing the person medically. Then, because the legislation still talks about DCFS, it goes to DCFS to review all of the findings, and then back to NAU to just be the messenger. So that means that the person to talk about the delays that the Member for West Bay West raised, is bouncing between three different departments to get one service. Much of that should be addressed in the planned amendments to the Health Insurance Act that the Minister for Health Plans to bring, to change the definition of indigent to the definition that it is done on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer in consultation with the Minister for Health. That should hopefully provide a one-stop shop to be able to reduce the time frame for approval.

In addition, I believe that drafting is working to introduce a definition of '*medically indigent*', because I am pretty sure I have been on very difficult calls or meetings with most or everybody's here constituents, who do not meet the definition of financially indigent because they might have large savings, but if they were to pay for the coverage for what ails them, they would turn around and become financially indigent; but because they are not financially indigent at the time that they apply, it's very difficult for NAU to deem them financially indigent. So there is a gap in which we have to make very difficult calls to explain to the person, "*As the facts stand, you are not financially indigent*", but there is a misconception out there, that the CINICO indigent coverage is just the older persons' coverage when it isn't. It is a very specific requirement based on your financial assessment.

If we bring about the change to the Health Insurance Act that would incorporate a definition of medically indigent, that might go a long way into covering some of the gaps that the mover of the Motion and the Member of West Bay West brought forward. In addition to all the other service lines that the Minister for Health pointed to, and the point that the Leader of the Opposition was making is that maybe there needs to be greater education as to what's available; however, I think that might only get us a portion of the way. So I believe that the Minister for Health is quite right that there are certain considerations to analyse, in terms of what would be the statutory definition, in particular? How much will this cost? Could we realistically, hand

on heart say that the country could afford it within the timeline of the Motion?

On balance, I think as a House we can't deny the issue, and it may be worth at least considering it and then returning to the House with a report of some analysis so that we could really get to grips of whether it can truly be done within the timeline, or whether some of the other planned measures might help to narrow the gap and maybe we don't have to take such large steps in a short period of time, but I do think that the issue is valid and we should really ponder it tonight.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that the Motion as outlined is, in substance, a laudable Motion, and I thank my colleagues who have already contributed to the debate on it I think they added a great deal of clarity and articulated many of the issues around how we move forward in relation to this issue, this matter.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt, and I am sure that every single Member of this Parliament would want us to be in a position, as a country, to be able to provide basic care services to our elderly, to our children. Anything we can do to contribute to the improvement in their quality of health is going to contribute to their quality of life.

Madam Speaker, I think it has become clear— and I clearly understand, we've all had the experiences, Madam Speaker. We can all share the anecdotes from our experiences both with our own constituents as well as many other people across this wonderful country of ours. We have many wonderful things here. We have many great things, but we also have people who are not able to meet the needs for their own health care. Sometimes for their children as well and Madam Speaker, that is something that is worth us addressing, so that their dignity and their ability to live a quality life can be provided.

However, Madam Speaker, I suppose it is unfortunate, in terms of timing, that yesterday we were laying and discussing and commenting on the Strategic Policy Statement for the next three financial years and of course, the Motion asked to consider implementation of these various services, both for children and for senior's above the age of 70, over at least aspects of that same period for the SPS.

Madam Speaker, what was being observed yesterday, certainly by some Members of the Opposition, was that they were expressing concerns about some of the numbers in the Strategic Policy Statement. Madam Speaker, the mover of the Motion, as I commented last night, rightly did his job in expressing

concerns, expressing the need to keep an eye on the numbers for this SPS, period, and the fact that, at least for 2026 we were down to 90.1 days of cash reserves compliance. I have no quibble with those kinds of observations, Madam Speaker. I think it's quite likely that he and I share a fairly conservative view in relation to ensuring that the finances of the country are stable and that we maintain compliance. So, Madam Speaker, the issue I think is primarily one of uncertainty around exactly where these gaps are, what the cost of this approach would therefore be, and in particular, how it would impact the SPS numbers, given the timeframes that have been proposed in the resolutions for the Motion.

Madam Speaker, I am sure that the Minister for Health and our colleague, Minister for Social Development, will be able to work together to assess where these particular gaps are and how we can possibly address them to put a price tag on it so that we know exactly what the challenge is to be able to fit it into the budget; but there is no doubt that every one of us would want to be able to do this. Our problem, Madam Speaker, is that there are so many challenges. There are so many things out there that we would want to do to help our people, we can't do them all one time and as I said, it's just unfortunate that we are talking about this Motion at the same time that we are talking about the SPS, and particularly in the context of concerns being expressed about the revenue numbers and in some cases, the expenditure numbers set out in the SPS.

Madam Speaker, the ability to come to a different view and want to caution the government in respect of those numbers is an absolutely fair comment. I am not saying we agree with all of it, but it's a fair comment.

Madam Speaker, I think what we would like to be able to do is to support the Motion, but with the acknowledgement that we do not want this to create an expectation that we could implement this within the time frame that's contemplated because of the financial circumstances. Strong financial circumstances are trending in the direction of stronger financial circumstances, but it would not be wise for us to simply say to the country, *yes, be assured that we can do this* because it is one of a set of challenges and services that we would like to be able to provide for our people to make the country stronger, to make our society stronger.

Madam Speaker, it was 18 months ago that we moved to implement the free lunches initially in primary schools and then high schools, to ensure that our children attending our public schools were able to be fed, were able to have a meal, were able to learn and be in an environment where they could learn appropriately without feeling like they couldn't, like their mind was elsewhere. It also helped many children, many families. That Madam Speaker, the cost of that, I think we have articulated in the past, as being somewhere around \$16.5 million or thereabouts. That was one thing that we immediately moved to Madam Speaker.

Of course, the mover of the Motion was involved as a Member of the Government at that point, we were all completely supportive. We are supportive in principle of this Motion as well, Madam Speaker. The question is whether we can identify where the real gaps are and ensure that we can cover those gaps within the physical space that we have available to us.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition Madam Speaker, in terms of the need to ensure that there is clarity around what services are available. What kind of funding for care is available? As I said, we all have the same challenges and we have all had the same kinds of experiences, I think. We give advice to say, "*This is available, so go and call this number. They will be able to help you*", and for one reason or another, it's turned around, they come back and they say, "*No, we have been told there is nothing available, there is no help available.*" So we need to do a better job of ensuring that there is clarity around what services and what funding is available. That Madam Speaker, will be a good result for our people. That's the kind of thing we need to be delivering for our people.

Madam Speaker, with those words, and the necessary caution around an expectation that we could do this necessarily within the time frame, I think this is a matter that is worth assessing properly and seeing how we can help our people and how we can address the various needs. We all know the needs are great. We all know that we would wish to be able to assist on all things right now, today. It may not happen within the time frame, Madam Speaker, but we can work towards that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? [Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [Pause] If not, I will call on the mover of the motion to exercise his right of reply if he chooses to.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Oh, yes, I do Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, there is a song by Van Halen entitled "Somebody Get Me a Doctor" and the lyrics reads— because I can't sing, Madam Speaker:

*You better call me a doctor.
Feelin' no pain.
Overloaded, down the drain.
Somebody get me a doctor.
You better call up the ambulance,
I'm deep in shock.*

The Speaker: Member, just a moment, please. I recognise the Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

For a matter of intervention in regards to the Motion, can I ask that the mover consider maybe amending the hard and fast timelines? I think based on all that I have actually commented and contributed to this Motion, it is clear that in essence we are in support of it, however, with the facts that have been shared, if one could give way in considering not being so hard and fast with the timelines as stated in the motion, that would be my ask.

The Speaker: Elected Member for Bodden Town West

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, if the Government think that they will need more time I have no issues from the standpoint. I am willing to remove the hard and fast time set, as long as the Government gives some kind of commitment to get it done. I will explain to you why, Madam Speaker, and I guess as I wrap up we can always change the Motion afterwards. Is that fine?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay. You see, Madam Speaker, the dates themselves were not arbitrary. Earlier I spoke about the Van Halen lyrics, and let me start over so I can get back my rhythm.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: “Somebody Get Me a Doctor” is the name of the song, and it said,

*You better call me a doctor.
Feelin' no pain.
Overloaded, down the drain.
Somebody get me a doctor.
You better call up the ambulance,
I'm deep in shock.*

Madam Speaker, as Members of this honourable House would know, we have people who sit back as we are waiting for the House to start and listen to music; some, as the senior Member for Red Bay has the authority I guess, being one of the senior Members of the House, to listen to his music loudly, while many of us who are much younger in this honourable House, listen through our headphones; and maybe it's just coincidence that when I was listening to some Van Halen during the break earlier that I remember Van Halen's story.

As most Members of the public and Members in this honourable House would be aware, normally when artistes and musicians are traveling, they have certain riders in their contract. I think some of them have some weird requests. I know Kanye West requires a barber chair in his room. I think Maria Carey is known for wanting white roses or fresh roses or whatever.

Van Halen, Madam Speaker, had a very weird request. They wanted a bowl of M&Ms backstage but there could not be any brown M&Ms in the bowl and the reason Van Halen did that, Madam Speaker, was that those stage shows require a lot of sound and lighting equipment, and if one of those stages fall, people get hurt or killed. Their rule was, once they got backstage and they saw a bowl of M&Ms and there was a brown one in it, the concert was cancelled and they kept their money; it was in their contract.

The reason they did it was also in their contract: very specific [instructions] on how they wanted the stage set up. What size lamps to use, what this to use, what that to use, to ensure their safety; and they stuck that little clause in there to see if the promoters or organisers actually read the contract, because if they had read it there would be a bowl of M&Ms or a bowl without any brown in it. At least it showed them that the contract was actually read thoroughly, so they had some comfort that the organizers also did the proper, necessary, stage work.

I say that to say, Madam Speaker, that yesterday we approved the Strategic Policy Statement for the Government starting from 1st of January 2024 through to the 31st of December 2026—three years, as required by the Public Management and Finance Act, but as we stand here today, the current Strategic Policy Statement that was approved by this honourable House back in July 2021 is still in effect [and] there were 10 broad outcomes in it, Madam Speaker.

Broad Outcome number 1 says, “**Improving education to promote lifelong learning and greater economic mobility**” and there is a list of initiatives under broad outcome number 1. Broad outcome number 2, Madam Speaker, is as follows: “**Ensure an equitable, sustainable and successful healthcare system**”, and there are seven initiatives under broad outcome number 2 that deal with ensuring an equitable, sustainable and successful health care system.

Item 1(a) reads “**promote and highlight local career employment opportunities and programmes**”; and item 1(b) says “**incentivise Caymanian medical professionals to return home to work**”.

Section two reads, “**promote healthier living and provide wellness education**” and the initiatives listed under 2 are: “**a) better marketing of public health services b) encourage more wellness checks, c), strengthen youth mental health support.**”

Item number 3 under broader outcome number 2, Madam Speaker, speaks about “**Modernise the healthcare legal framework**”; item number 4 says, “**Expand public health care services throughout our communities.**”

[Item] 4(a) says, “**Enhanced medical services in public school**” for 4(b) “**offer more public health services and improve facilities and district clinics**” and 4(c) “**Implement a district clinic shuttle**”

system for transport to and from doctor appointments and collect prescriptions”.

Number 5, Madam Speaker, under broad outcome number 2 says, **“Enhance the Cayman Islands Health Services Authority (HSA) building and services”** and 5(a) says **“move to a more efficient service at A— less waiting time and a more welcoming approach”**; 5(b) says, **“Ensure quality control at the hospital = frequent inspections”**; 5(c) says, **“provide specialised youth mental health facility”**, 5(d) **“Initiate an overhaul of hospital rooms, waiting areas and Emergency Response areas”**; 5(e) **“Implement proper sleeping facilities for family members staying with patients overnight”**— I remember that was a big one for the Member from Savannah. 5(f) **“Provide increased amenities on site for patients and family members, e.g. a 24- hour snack shop,”** and five 5(g) **“beautify and enhance HSA premises and grounds.”**

Moving on to [outcome] number 6, Madam Speaker, **“Enhance the overall standard of health care services”**, 6(a) says, **“Develop a Joint-Ministerial Council to establish additional assisted living homes and retirement facilities through public/private partnership”** and 6(b) says, **“Implement public education programmes on the negative impact of over-utilisation of healthcare services”**, which brings me to lucky number 7, Madam Speaker, which says, **“recognise healthcare as a basic human right.”**

[Item] 7(a) says, **“Revamp and expand CIN-ICO services.”** I can say that this honourable House already voted the necessary funds for CINICO to be expanded, so that initiative has started. Again, I want to thank all the Members at the time. [Item] 7(b) says, **“Provide free health care for children and the elderly”**, 7(c) says, **“Reform existing criteria to access free healthcare”** and 7(d) says, **“Promote better mental health and special needs insurance coverage.”**

Now, Madam Speaker, this was passed in July 2021 and you can see why July 2024 was used, it basically would have been three years since the current Strategic Policy Statement would have passed, which went through the Caucus and Cabinet of the PACT Government, and this honourable Parliament back in July 2021 because I am not sure when Parliament may meet again. I want to get a better understanding at this point, I think the term is void there, the government or whatever, to check to see exactly what the Government’s approach is going to be because it is something that every single person in the PACT Government agreed to do back in July 2021, when we were putting together the Strategic Policy Statement which is still in effect.

Madam Speaker, the Minister was right when she spoke about the high cost and it is exactly that high cost that is the problem and I am going to tell you why: We have something called the segregated insurance

fund. When we started that, Madam Speaker, the purpose of that fund was to contribute to cover rather 50 per cent of the cost of indigent care in this country, so the private sector and the Government would have taken 50 per cent each. When that fund was started, Madam Speaker, the government at that time used to collect around \$3 million per year, which means that we were spending roughly \$6 million per year, in terms of indigent care. Today, that fund collects \$5 million or thereabout and the cost, as the Minister says, is now in excess of \$100 million per year. Madam Speaker, this problem left unchecked, is going to bankrupt this country.

Yesterday in my contribution, Madam Speaker, I spoke about the dependency ratio, and I am going to remind Members again of what it is. As it stands, the current dependency ratio is roughly 34 per cent or thereabouts— 33/34 per cent. It means that 76 per cent of our population is taking care of 34 per cent of our population. That on the surface looks good, and makes Cayman comparable to many countries around the world; but Madam Speaker, if we take out the transient, non-Caymanian population, the people who this House is primarily responsible to, the people who we primarily report to— our bosses— have a dependency ratio that is more than 50 per cent. I think it is roughly 51 per cent. It means on a Caymanian standpoint today, 49 per cent of the population of working age is taking care of 51 per cent. Let me say that again: 49 per cent of the Caymanian population would be required to take care of 51 per cent of the Caymanian population.

Madam Speaker, this is why when I talk about virtually to read, being above 2.0, now we are at 2.1 to have a growing Caymanian population. This is what we talk about when we look at planning long-term and these are the structural changes that I am talking about. We can’t have a situation where less than 20 years ago, we were looking at \$6 million of indigent care to an excess of \$100 million now.

Clearly the segregated insurance fund has not kept pace with what the true cause is, to the point that right now, Madam Speaker, when we look at what CIN-ICO alone spends, then you factor in what the HSA and the Ministry of Health spend, plus the overseas medical— you got two inside there HEA 2 and NGS 55. Two numbers that would keep every Member of this honourable House awake.

Yesterday the Premier made many of these issues clear in reference to the ReGen project, about kicking the can down the road, so now I am going to ask honourable Members of this House: How long are we going to kick *this* can down the road? We already know the cost of this to the country today, and if in 15, 16 years the cost went up by \$100 million and now we have a more ageing population, the question is how long can we sit down and not deal with this problem?

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, I spoke about the HSA and the structural changes needed there. I will be the first to tell you, it is not the nicest of position for any

government to be in, but we need to sit down and have the conversation just as when we set up the Statutory Authorities and Government-Owned Companies (SAGCs), the problem that we have in this country is that nobody ever wants to go back to review them to say, is it working? Is it achieving what it was supposed to achieve? Is it doing what it was supposed to do? Because Madam Speaker, no one can convince me that we have an organisation like the HSA, and I want to say right now: I am a big fan of the HSA.

I think we have some of the best people working there; we have the best maternity ward and they have people who work very hard. Probably one of the best emergency rooms that you'll find anywhere in the Caribbean, and as much as people complain about waiting times at the HSA, I can guarantee you waiting times are way worse in other countries— I can tell you that.

Madam Speaker, here is the fact: Based on the last numbers I looked at, the HSA had 460 million of non-medical expenses, \$60 million of non-medical expenses. In other words, that is administrative costs, and of the HSA revenue numbers, the only amount that the HSA collects that does not come from the government, is \$30 million. In short, Madam Speaker, we are running an organisation that is doing about \$160-170 million a year in revenues, and of that amount, \$30 million does not come from the government and we are basically spending \$60 million to collect that \$30 million— Madam Speaker, that is a \$30 million deficit.

When we look at most hospitals across the world Madam Speaker, of all the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the United States is the worst. Their ratio is actually 25/75, where the medical cost is 75 per cent for most of the hospital and the administrative cost is 25. In most OECD countries it ranges from 11 per cent to 18 per cent where roughly 11 to 18 per cent of the overall cost is administrative, and the balance of roughly 82 to 89 per cent would have been medical costs. We are running at almost 50/50, which is highly inefficient.

Madam Speaker, there was a time going back to 2019, when the government \$160 million in surplus and when you had that kind of money, Madam Speaker, you could afford it— \$20-30 million could get lost in that, but now we are at a point Madam Speaker, as the Premier said, we are sailing very close to the wind and there are structural changes that we have that will not happen overnight. You don't go from \$701 million expenses in 2019 to \$973 million in 2022 and then get cut \$100-\$200 million that quickly.

It is something that must be reduced gradually, because at the end of the day, this is money that the government is spending in the economy, buying goods and services in the economy that people have become accustomed to. At the end of the day, the government is still the largest purchaser of goods and services in the economy; so the government can go through now and cut \$100 or \$200 million, go back to 2019 spending

levels and think it won't have a knock-on effect on the local economy. It doesn't work like that. It has to be a gradual reversal.

However, Madam Speaker, the bottom line about it — and this is why I mentioned the Spending & Government Efficiency Commission (SGEC) yesterday, we are going to need to have that honest conversation with our people and we need to have an honest conversation with ourselves and I will say it right now: You can bring the consultants in, I am convinced that HSA needs to go back to being a public hospital.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The biggest driver of health care costs in this country is not the HSA. CINCICO's rates go up every year, Madam Speaker. This year it has gone up 6 per cent, in terms of government cost, last year it went up 13 per cent, but when you look at where the HSA is expanding to, it is expanding into other services that other hospitals on Island cannot provide.

We need to have an update of the medical plan for this country, Madam Speaker. The Auditor General did a wonderful job back in, I think, 2017 or 2018 when she talked about the overall health care industry. At that time, it was around \$300-something million. It's way more than that now, with an ageing population.

Madam Speaker, I say that to say that I have no problem adjusting the date, but all I am going to say right now is, Madam Speaker: This is one can that we can't continue to kick down the road. I have a constituent that, starting next year, she has to go find \$900 for her daughter that she currently can't find. Then what? We have created a system in this country Madam Speaker, where we have allowed private sector insurance companies to come here, cherry-pick, make a ton load of money—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: And leave the Caymanian people to turn off the light on the people who truly need help. The purpose of insurance is to spread risk. The risk is not being spread! It is being born solely by the Caymanian people and we cannot continue to kick this can down the road.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Oh, you did your job too, you brought Health City in. That helped a lot too, so I want to thank you for that.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, the irony of all this is that on the 6th of June 2019, Private Member's Motion No. 7 which was actually passed by

this honourable House under the previous government pretty much asked for the exact same thing I am asking for now and it passed unanimously.

I want to go on record to thank the then Minister of Health, now the Minister for Labour, the Honourable Member for Bodden Town East who got up on behalf of the government at the time and accepted the motion. I want to thank the Member for Cayman Brac East that supported the motion; I want to thank the Member for George Town Central, who supported the motion. The Member for West Bay West was in the Chair at the time, but I know he supported the motion because he has always been an advocate.

I also want to go on record to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Member for George Town East for his support; thank the honourable Member for George Town South at the time, for the support; thank the Member for George Town West for his support, and of course, I cannot miss my good friend, the Member for Red Bay who was Premier at the time and accepted the government motion.

Now, we recognised that while it passed in 2019 and COVID set everything back, the spirit, the essence was there, that we do recognise that we have \$100 million problem that was created in 15 years so, if we need to move the dates to get it working, that's fine. I just used the July date because it gives us three years since when we passed it to at least make some progress; but the reality is that we cannot afford to continue kicking this can down the road because many of our people are staying awake at night worrying. You have people in our country who don't feel well and are afraid to go to the hospital.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes; and we wait until it gets really bad and then we find ourselves in a situation where 20 per cent of the people is responsible for 80 per cent of the cost. That's where preventative care, wellness, et cetera, needs to be done and even if we start out, even if the phased approach is where we start with free health checks or whatever we need to do to get people regularly checked up but we cannot afford to keep kicking this can. I am fine to move the hard and fast dates to give the government the flexibility, but I will tell you upfront that this is something that is near, dear and personal to me.

Part of the reason and I can tell people this, my first child who is officially 20—Happy Birthday, Brandon, because you are probably watching—was born without any health insurance. Madam Speaker, I can tell you how expensive a baby is when you do not have health insurance. I have been lucky, Madam Speaker, that because I got a scholarship from the people of the Cayman Islands who gave me a good education, I have been blessed with very good jobs and very good income, but Madam Speaker, I am going to tell you a story too.

There is a particular reason why I have always worked only for big companies. You know why? Because there was a time in my life, I was not as sexy as I am now; I was overweight, and Madam Speaker, I could not get affordable health insurance. Companies would not hire me because it would have cost them too much for my health insurance costs; so that's why I had to go work for these big companies and I have been lucky to work with big companies that had deep pockets that could afford to cover my obese self.

I say that to say, Madam Speaker, that there are families right now, that want to leave their job because it is stressing them out but cannot afford to leave it because they may lose their health insurance coverage or they may have a pre-existing condition. These are fundamental issues that our people are facing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yep; so, Madam Speaker, I am fine in moving the dates and as a matter of fact, I will ask the Honourable Minister, whatever date she wants to work with, she needs to work with, but I am going to tell every single Member of this honourable House—everybody. This is something that is near, dear and personal to me. It is one of the things I got into politics for, and if I have to walk door to door in everybody's constituency (and I would lose some weight in the process, too), I will do that, but Madam Speaker, this is something that needs to be done.

We can't have the Caymanian people continue to take this burden for too long. So, Minister, with that said, I am flexible to whatever date you want to use, I am fine with it. I expect it is not going to be overnight, but I expect some baby steps to be taken.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Elected Member... Right. That is what I was going to ask.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: With that said, Madam Speaker, I move a Motion to change the first RESOLVE section that says:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for children as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 70 as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 68 as soon as possible.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I second the Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Elected Member for West Bay West. The amendment has been moved. Does the mover wish to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Very briefly, Madam Speaker, basically to thank the Government. The whole idea behind the different laddering, Madam Speaker, is recognising that there are financial challenges— you have to go do the research. It could be a situation where you know you can do some early or you could do some later, but the whole idea is that we are phasing the population, start at least with 70-year olds.

Madam Speaker, if you look at the census there are not that many Caymanians about the age of 70— they are probably already covered; but the whole idea about it is to put that health insurance card in their hand to say they have health insurance and they have the flexibility and don't feel as though they are indigent because the whole idea behind this, is to start reducing the dignity gap in this country.

We are taking many people's dignity when they have to go to the government cap in hand. Let us put a card in their hand instead, and give them the flexibility.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Elected Member for Bodden Town West. Does any other Member wish to speak on the amendment?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay. Does the mover wish to exercise his right of reply on the amendment?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Briefly—no, Madam Speaker, I am fine.

The Speaker: The question is that the Motion be amended as follows:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for children by 1st September, 2024as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 70 by 1st July 2024as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 68 by 1st July 2025as soon as possible.

All those in favour, please say Aye, those against no.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 13/2022/2023 is duly passed.

The Motion as amended is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak to the amended motion?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak to the amended Motion?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Just making sure. The question now is:
BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for children by 1st September, 2024as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 70 by 1st July 2024as soon as possible;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers implementing free basic healthcare services for Caymanian seniors above the age of 68 by 1st July 2025as soon as possible.

All those in favour, please say Aye, those against no.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 13/2022/2023 passed as amended.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: I recognise the Minister for Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I ask for your indulgence for a sixty-second pause just to have a quick word with a colleague in the House.

The Speaker: How about we take a five-minute pause? Actually, a suspension for me to stretch my legs.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Yes, Ma'am.

Proceedings suspended at 12:46a.m.

Proceedings resumed at 12:57a.m.

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

**Private Member's Motion No. 14 of 2022/2023
Motion to establish a
fair employment commission**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 14-2022/2023 standing in my name— Motion to establish a fair employment commission, and the motion reads as follows.

WHEREAS Underemployment is still a challenge for many Caymanians in the Labour Force;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands economy is largely a service base economy;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Constitution affirms our commitment to being a country with an immigration system that protects Caymanians, gives security to long-term residents and welcomes legitimate visitors and workers;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Constitution affirms our commitment to being a country with a vibrant diversified economy, which provides full employment;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Government considers establishing a Fair Employment Commission to ensure Caymanians are given every rightful opportunity to secure the jobs they are qualified for so that they may provide for their families;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Government considers making the necessary changes to the relevant laws to ensure that the Fair Employment Commission comes into force by 1st July, 2024.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder? The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I beg to second Private Member's Motion No. 14.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate. Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, Madam Speaker very briefly.

Madam Speaker, I really can't take credit for this initiative. I must say that this initiative started under the previous government by the then Member for Red Bay who was also the Minister for Labour at the time.

In a sense, Madam Speaker, one of the things that we recognised is that when work permit holders or some employers apply for a work permit and they don't get [approval for] a particular job, they can appeal that

decision by asking for reconsideration and the whole nine yards and there is an Appeals Tribunal.

What we found as a shortcoming, Madam Speaker, is that when Caymanians apply for a job and don't get the job, we find ourselves in a situation where they advise WORC that they applied for this job and they weren't successful, even though they met the criteria of being qualified, et cetera. However, even if they were discriminated against, the question is do you then still want to go work for an organisation that didn't want you in the first place? [It's likely] they are going to be just trying to manage you out. Whenever you try to force someone in a particular organisation that didn't want them, especially a Caymanian, it creates more stress for them on the job.

What we want to target with this Fair Employment Commission is rather a body that looks at what has happened and if need be to either:

- a. Work with the company to find either some way for the Cayman to be given an opportunity; or
- b. Compensate the Caymanian for some level of discrimination.

This is something that started like I said, under the previous government. When the PACT Government took over and I was a Member at the time, it was something that was in the pipeline that we realised still needed to be looked at. I just wanted to make sure that the work that had started on this from the previous government, and for the last two years continues, and that the Government doesn't lose sight especially now, where we have one of the lowest unemployment rates for the last 33 years of 3.6 per cent. The truth is that underemployment is still an issue and we still need to make sure that our people maximise what they can make from that standpoint.

Therefore, we want to make sure that we set a body up, it may require some amendments to some legislation maybe on both the Work Law and the Labour Law, to get something as a hybrid inside it. That's pretty much what we are looking for.

I understand that the current Minister for Labour who was part of the previous government would have supported this initiative, so I don't think there should be an issue. Nonetheless, I just want to put it out there to make sure that work continues.

That would be my contribution on this Motion. Thank you.

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

The Honourable Minister of Labour.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, regarding the Motion from my political neighbour, the Member for Bodden Town West, I support the Fair Employment Commission Motion No. 14.

In fact, Madam Speaker, many in this Chamber would recall that in 2018 as Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing, I fully supported this initiative when the then Cabinet approved drafting instructions for the establishment of a Fair Employment Commission.

Madam Speaker, the Commission aims to promote fairness and equality in the workplace across the Cayman Islands. This is something that is near and dear to my heart.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Labour, I believe it is essential that every individual who is willing and able to work, will be able to secure meaningful employment based on their qualifications, experience and abilities without discrimination based on their gender, race, religion or any other irrelevant factors. The establishment of a fair employment commission will provide a mechanism to investigate and address complaints of unfair treatment in the workplace and in hiring practices alongside our Immigration and Labour laws.

Madam Speaker, this project aligns with our Government's commitment to promoting human rights and equality and I am proud to be a part of it. I believe that creating a fair, and inclusive workplace culture will not only benefit employees but also lead to increased harmony, productivity and economic growth.

As Minister for Labour, I pledge my Ministry's continued work on the implementation of the Fair Employment Commission so that we can create a more equitable and just employment culture in the Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, I just want to go on to say that, it has always been in my nature to create fair opportunities for our Caymanians, such as the right for a Caymanian to get a second chance in this country after committing a crime or otherwise.

Madam Speaker, some 10 years ago I brought a motion as I recognised that persons in this country had no recourse and I built my premise off of the Health Insurance Commission—which I think is a beautiful thing, where if persons have problems with their health insurance or claims, et cetera, they have recourse where they can actually go back to the Commission and have them make a decision on whether it was fair or not.

I also brought a motion because I recognised there was no recourse for persons who had bought "lemon cars"—new but faulty cars.

There's also no recourse for persons with property insurance, and I brought one for motor and property insurance trying to create a commission some 10 years ago which was passed unanimously in the House.

Madam Speaker, I just mentioned that to indicate my pledge and support to continue to work on implementation of this Fair Employment Commission.

I want to thank the Chief Officer, Wesley Howell for staying up so late and being here in Parliament; and I want to thank the Ministry team for staying

committed. I also thank the mover of this Motion, the Member for Bodden Town West.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

I now call on the mover of the Motion to exercise his right of reply.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I just want to thank the Honourable Minister for Labour and the Members of the Government. I also want to publicly thank the Chief Officer, Wesley Howell for the work he has done and continues to do. I had the pleasure of working very closely with him and he is a very competent, very qualified, very passionate Caymanian and is a great ambassador and representative of the Civil Service.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The question is:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Government considers establishing a Fair Employment Commission to ensure Caymanians are given every rightful opportunity to secure the jobs they are qualified for so that they may provide for their families; AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Government considers making the necessary changes to the relevant laws to ensure that the Fair Employment Commission comes into force by 1st July, 2024.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 14 of 2022-2023 was passed.

**Private Member's Motion
No. 15 of 2022-2023**

**Motion For A Salary Increase and To Introduce A
Performance Incentive Compensation Scheme
In The Civil Service**

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we're almost there, down to the very last motion for the night. I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 15 of 2022-2023: Motion for a

Salary Increase and to introduce a Performance Incentive Compensation Scheme in the Civil Service.

The Motion reads as follows:

WHEREAS there is a desire by the public for a world class civil service to meet current and future demands of the public;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands economy is largely service base which places a demand on the skill sets of individuals;

AND WHEREAS Government must compete with the Private Sector to attract, recruit, and retain talent;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Government considers increasing the salaries of Public Servants by:

5 per cent on 1st July, 2023;

4 per cent on 1st July, 2024; and

4 per cent on 1st July, 2025

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT Government considers implementing a Performance Compensation scheme within the Public Service starting in 2023.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder to the Motion?

The elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I second Private Member's Motion No.15.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate.

Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in consultation with Members of the Government and recognising that we did a Strategic Policy Statement yesterday, at the time when the Motion was filed, we had no idea what the numbers would have been within the SPS. While the initial draft that we sent out to some Ministries had included it, I realised now—in terms of the work being done on the Strategic Policy Statement and the Government now finalising the 2024/25 budget— that they may require a little bit more time.

With that said, Madam Speaker, it is my intention to remove the start date—because if we move the 1st July 2023 while the Government will still be developing the budget, it will naturally impact both the 2024 and 2025 years—of 1st July, 2023 to give the Government more flexibility while they are going through the budget process.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Does the Member wish to move a motion to amend at this time?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, I would like to move a motion to change the date in both “resolve” sections to “as soon as possible” to read: five per cent; four per cent; and four per cent as soon as possible. Then, under the “further resolved” section, to change “2023” for implementation of the Performance Compensation scheme within the Public Service to “as soon as possible.”

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I rise to second the amendment to the Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Elected Member for West Bay West.

Does the mover wish to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, Madam Speaker, briefly.

Madam Speaker, as I said before, when I filed the Motion, I was caught off guard a little bit with the SPS numbers I think most Members in this honourable House—probably all Members—will no doubt accept or believe that the public servants that we have, do need a pay raise. We do recognise that this is a challenging time Madam Speaker, nonetheless, it is something that we still need to consider; where we help wherever we can help.

Madam Speaker, the driving force at the time when this Motion was filed was the rising interest rates. Just to put that in context. If you have a \$300,000 mortgage and you had it over a 25-year period, you would have seen your monthly payments go from roughly \$1,800 per month to about \$2,700 per month.

If your mortgage was in the \$400,000 region, you would have seen your monthly payment go from \$2,400 per month to \$3,600 per month; and if you had a \$500,000 mortgage, Madam Speaker, you would see your monthly payments go from \$3,000 per month to \$4,000 per month. If you have a \$600,000 mortgage you'd see your payments go from \$3,600 per month to roughly \$5,400 per month; and that's over a 25-year loan.

Equally, Madam Speaker, if it was a 20-year loan, your \$300,000 mortgage would move from \$2,000 per month to \$2,900 per month. If your loan was within the \$400,000 region, it would move from \$2,700 per month to \$3,900 per month; and if it's a \$500,000 mortgage over a 20-year period it would move from \$3,400 per month to roughly \$4,800 per month. If it's in the \$600,000 region, Madam Speaker, it would move from roughly \$4,000 per month to \$5,800 per month.

Madam Speaker, we're just talking about mortgages here, I haven't even touched credit cards and car loans yet, which are normally even much higher rates.

Thus, Madam Speaker, we do recognise that the world that we're living in right now, as the Honourable Member for Red Bay said during his contribution in the SPS, that our inflation is actually imported. It is

not based on demand from the Caymanian public. It is based on demand from the US public and we buy the goods in the US, so whatever the price is, is generally what the price is; so there is little that we can do in that regard.

As I said in my debate, this is the time now for us to start looking at structural changes, capital markets and so forth where we can get longer term fixed-products that give people longer security.

When we looked at the last CIMA report as of June 2022 we had roughly \$2.4 billion in loans and to have that amount of money be subject to those levels of increases, that's money being taken out of the local economy. We have already seen that to some extent in the latter half of last year, when we saw a slowdown, in terms of the rate in which we are collecting customs duty compared to the first half of the year. Therefore, we do recognise that we are living in challenging times.

Also, as I said in my SPS debate, fuel prices still become an issue. This is one of the reasons I would encourage the Government at this point, as you put together the budget to see what we can do to encourage more renewables, and start reducing the money that we have leaving this country, which is over \$200 million per year to basically bring in fossil fuels, and see how we can save money.

Ultimately, the world as it stood pre COVID was a different world and if anyone out there thinks it's going to be coming back anytime soon, it's not going to happen; that's just the reality of the world we are living in.

Businesses will have to make adjustments, some people will also have to make adjustments in terms of their personal choices, and the Government itself will also have to make some level of adjustment. Like I said, I do recognise that the numbers, as presented, have certain challenges and when I look at the 2026 [cash reserves] number of 90.1 cash days, it occurred to me that if one Cuban boat shows up that number is gone.

Thus, it is very flexible, very delicate and as much as I am sure that everyone supports it, nonetheless, I think we just need to make sure we consider it in a responsible manner and to make sure it's balanced. The Government, I understand, is currently looking at something so we are on the same wave length in that regard.

In a nutshell, Madam Speaker, when I looked at the totality of what the Government planned to spend over the next three years in both operational costs (Opex) and capital cost (Capex), this is actually less than 1.5 per cent of the total spend, in terms of what it would have done to implement this.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I will just close the debate because I think most of the case for it has already been made during the Strategic Policy Statement debate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

The Speaker: Does anyone else wish to speak on the amendment?

The Speaker: The Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, let me say at the outset that we're obliged to the Member for agreeing to move an amendment to the Motion that was filed for the reasons he indicated. Clearly the Government would be in a difficulty to consider the implementation of the salary increases over the period originally indicated.

Madam Speaker, we would absolutely love to be in a position to deliver these salary increases over this period. We would love to be able to do more than that because there's no doubt that our good civil servants who work hard to provide services to the people of this country every day are deserving, and they have challenges just like everybody else.

The Member has very clearly set out the kinds of challenges that everyone is experiencing in the context of the current interest rate environment just on its own. Madam Speaker, that's not even to reflect on the general inflationary environment, although that is calming down somewhat, it is still a challenge for people to operate within an increasing cost environment.

Madam Speaker, I wonder if I could just clarify with the Member, in terms of the proposed amendment. I thought I heard the Member suggest that it would be 5 per cent as soon as possible, on 1st July 2023 or in 2023; I am not certain. I think what would obviously put the Government in a position to accept an amended considered Motion would be to consider extending increases to the public servants of these sorts of percentages over a three year span.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, that's fine.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: If we could just have a clarification of that Amendment so that it truly reflects that these are the amounts over a three-year span that are proposed, and that this be implemented as soon as possible, in terms of the Government's ability to have the fiscal space for it.

Other than that Madam Speaker, we are entirely supportive. The intention of the Government, though no specific cost of living adjustments were reflected in the SPS, was to try to find the fiscal space as we went along at the very least, to deal with some honorariums to put our civil servants in a position where they could have their actual income adjusted in order to meet some of the challenging scenarios that we are all facing.

Madam Speaker, with that, at your discretion in terms of clarifying that Amendment, I would be grateful to have us consider that. Thank you.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Madam Speaker, thanks very much and I thank the Honourable Premier for that suggestion. I'm fine to change the Amendment of the Motion if that's fine, if the rules allow me to because we didn't vote on the other one.

Madam Speaker, I will remove the last "resolve" regarding the Performance Compensation scheme because I think the real emphasis needs to be on the salary increase at this point. Madam Speaker—

[Pause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Just briefly, Madam Speaker, to put in context, the 13 per cent took into consideration the current rate of inflation, the expected future rate of inflation and a possible additional 25 basis points as the Fed [Federal Reserve] may have raised interest rates by the next meeting in June, which would also have an effect on the CPI [Consumer Price Index] for this year.

Also, as I said in a previous debate, housing cost is actually 35 per cent of the CPI. It came out around 12.8 per cent when I did a rough calculation and I rounded it to 13 per cent. That was the genesis of the 13 per cent.

Madam Speaker, of course, the five per cent because for this year there is an urgent need in many families.

With that said, I understand, as the Premier said, that the Government is finalising their budgets and the SPS came back slightly different. Thus, I understand the Government needs to have some level of flexibility.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The question is that the Motion be amended as follows: **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Government considers increasing the salaries of Public Servants by 13 per cent over a three-year period. The Amendment also includes the removal of the second "resolve".**

The Speaker: Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I beg to second the Amendment.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 15 of 2022-2023 was passed.

[Pause]

The Speaker: The Motion as amended is now open for debate.

Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak on the amended Motion?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Just to thank everyone for their tacit approval. I want to go home now.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
The Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson:

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it's very late. I had a very long speech here but I will summarise. I think the Premier has said it best, that we are all very appreciative of the work of our public servants. We have seen them do some amazing work for us as we work to deliver the government priorities and to make lives better.

I want to thank the Member for Bodden Town West for moving the Motion and recognising the work that is done in the civil service and the wider public service.

We have to be very prudent in our spending. We have seen the importance, Madam Speaker, of having a rainy-day fund. We have seen COVID come and the Government be in a position to not layoff civil servants and to actually pay honorariums to our front-line workers. Thus, we want to make sure that anything we do, in terms of raising salaries, can be sustained and is financially prudent.

Madam Speaker, with those words, I just want to thank everyone here for recognising the work that the Civil Service and the wider public service are doing. We have done some amazing work.

In countries right now there are people striking because of pay; our civil servants turn up to work every day. That is because the Government has consistently showed their appreciation and we believe that we have shown our civil servants that we care about them.

Madam Speaker, I think we all agree, we would really love to do these increases, but we want to make sure that anything that we do is sustainable and can be justified.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

Does the mover wish to exercise his right of reply?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I just realised my son is watching. Happy Birthday, Brandon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The question now is, **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT Government considers increasing the salaries of Public Servants by 13 per cent over a three-year period.**

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No.15 of 2022-2023 as amended was passed.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I am going to be very brief, Members want to get home. I appreciate [it's] the early hour in the morning and I appreciate the work that has been put in today to ensure that we got through all the Private Members' Motions satisfactorily.

Madam Speaker, tomorrow [sic] [today] we will get on to dealing with Bills and of course we will have Questions and maybe one or two Statements.

Madam Speaker, I want to wish everyone a good morning and travel safely home.

With that Madam Speaker, I would move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10.00 a.m. this morning.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: The question is that this House do now adjourn until 10.00 a.m. today.

Since we are on today, I also join the Member for Bodden Town West in wishing his son, Brandon, on behalf of this honourable House, a happy birthday.

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjections]

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

This honourable House is now adjourned until 10.00 a.m. today.

At 1.38 a.m. the House stood adjourned until 10.00 a.m. Friday, 28th April, 2023.