



COMMONWEALTH  
PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSOCIATION

*Legislature of the Cayman Islands*

# *Sixteenth Youth Parliament of the Cayman Islands*



## OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

**Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2023**

*(Pages 1-54)*

**Hon. Shanell Martinez, MP**

*Speaker*

**Disclaimer:** The electronic version of the *Official Hansard Report* is for informational purposes only. The printed version remains the official record.

PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Shanell Martinez, MP  
*Speaker*

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Lili Anne Aleria, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Elected Member for George Town East
Hon. Alexander Harris, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of Finance & Economic Development and Border Control & Labour, Elected Member for Prospect
Hon. Amani Ebanks, MP	Minister of Tourism & Transport, Elected Member for George Town North
Hon. Keira Bodden, MP	Minister of Health & Wellness, and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. Ashley Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, Elected Member for West Bay South
Hon. Chloe Reid, MP	Minister of Financial Services & Commerce and Investment, Innovation & Social Development, <i>Elected Member</i> <i>for West Bay East</i>
Hon. Jelani Hanson, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage, <i>Elected Member for George Town West</i>
Hon. Chad Powell, MP	Minister of Education and District Administration & Lands, <i>Elected Member for North Side</i>

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Jordan McDonald	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Alicia Faulknor	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS  
GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Miss Elizabeth Thomas, MP	Elected Member for George Town Central
Mr. Pranav Anu, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac East
Miss Mia Groves, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town East

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , <i>Elected Member for Newlands</i>
Miss Abbey Walton, MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , <i>Elected Member for West Bay West</i>
Mr. Raldayne Thomas, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town Central
Miss Raeann Matute-Scott, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman
Mr. Christian Campbell, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
Miss Abygale Elliott, MP	Elected Member for George Town South
Hon. Bethany Mitchell, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Elected Member for East End
Miss Lorlie Bryan, MP	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Mr. Christopher Sanchez, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. Zachary Allen, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North

**EDITED HANSARD  
SIXTEENTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT 2022/2023  
MONDAY  
13 MARCH 2023  
10.40 AM**

---

**Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Speaker of the Parliament, President of the CPA Cayman Islands Branch, Chairperson of the CPA Youth Parliament Organising Committee:** Your Excellency, Governor Roper, Honourable Premier, Honourable Deputy Premier, Honourable Deputy Speaker, other Honourable Members and Members of Cabinet, Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition, all Elected Members of Parliament and former Members of Parliament, a very special welcome to our Youth Parliamentarians, their parents, siblings, teachers—I see some classmates up there; and all other invited guests, as the Chair of the Youth Parliament, I extend to all a heartfelt welcome to the House of Parliament.

It is a privilege to serve in this capacity and observe our young parliamentarians get engaged with national, regional and international issues. The theme of this 16th Youth Parliament for Commonwealth Day is, *Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future*. Before I give my brief remarks, it was kindly asked that the Presiding Officer or Speaker reads the King's message from the Chair at the opening of proceedings, therefore, I will read accordingly.

His Majesty the King's Commonwealth Day message, 13th March, 2023: **“Commonwealth Day was an occasion of particular pride for my beloved Mother, The late Queen - a treasured opportunity to celebrate our Commonwealth family, to whose service she dedicated her long and remarkable life.**

**In succeeding Her Majesty as Head of the Commonwealth, I draw great strength from her example, together with all that I have learnt from the extraordinary people I have met throughout the Commonwealth, over so many years.**

**The Commonwealth has been a constant in my own life, and yet its diversity continues to amaze and inspire me. Its near-boundless potential as a force for good in the world demands our highest ambition; its sheer scale challenges us to unite and be bold.**

**This week marks the tenth anniversary of the Charter of the Commonwealth, which gives expression to our defining values - peace and justice; tolerance, respect and solidarity; care for our environment, and for the most vulnerable among us.**

**These are not simply ideals. In each lies an imperative to act, and to make a practical difference in the lives of the 2.6 billion people who call the Commonwealth home.**

**Whether on climate change and biodiversity loss, youth opportunity and education, global health, or economic co-operation, the Commonwealth can play an indispensable role in the most pressing issues of our time. Ours is an association not just of shared values, but of common purpose and joint action.**

**In this we are blessed with the ingenuity and imagination of a third of the world's population, including one and a half billion people under the age of thirty. Our shared humanity contains such precious diversity of thought, culture, tradition and experience. By listening to each other, we will find so many of the solutions that we seek.**

**This extraordinary potential, which we hold in common, is more than equal to the challenges we face. It offers us unparalleled strength, not merely to face the future, but to build it. Here, the Commonwealth has an incredible opportunity, and responsibility, to create a genuinely durable future - one that offers the kind of prosperity that is in harmony with nature, and that will also secure our unique and only planet for generations to come.**

**The myriad connections between our nations have sustained and enriched us for more than seven decades. Our commitment to peace, progress and opportunity will sustain us for many more.**

**Let ours be a Commonwealth that not only stands together, but strives together, in restless and practical pursuit of the global common good.”** That marks the end of the King's message.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) will be celebrating Commonwealth Day across the CPA's nine regions, 180 parliaments and legislatures. The year 2023, as we just heard, has been designated as the “Year of the Youth” to connect and work together at many levels through deep-rooted networks of friendship and goodwill.

The CPA also has a duty and obligation to reach out to the youth. To that end, the Youth Parliament Programme serves to elevate and enlighten the younger generation in their pursuit of knowledge and information derived from their various areas of research and understanding of the issues.

I am confident and proud to say that as Youth Parliamentarians, you all have demonstrated the discipline and commitment to prepare for these proceedings and you have gracefully acknowledged and accepted

the guidance and tutelage offered to you in preparation for this sitting, amongst other things.

An integral part of the CPA is also to work towards a better representation of women in legislatures and for the furtherance of gender equity across the Commonwealth. As I look at the members of our Youth Parliament sitting today, I see the Cayman Islands meeting that goal.

Today, you will be debating two Motions, namely:

1. Amended Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023: Implementation of a Progressive Income Tax System in the Cayman Islands; and
2. Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023: Implementing a New Public Transport System in the Cayman Islands.

It is important that I mention that, considering the lack of legislative framework on these subject matters that will be debated, the contribution from today's debate will not be ignored or disregarded. It's extremely pleasing and promising to see you, as the Youth Parliamentarians, debate these controversial issues. It's good to see you are taking [the] lead.

Previous contributions made by past youth parliamentarians in the Cayman Islands have influenced Government to introduce a number of Bills— if they were Laws, all of them are now referred to as Acts, as you would have learned. Some of them relate to the environment, such as single use plastics; also the Sexual Harassment Bill, amongst others. Clearly, the issues that you are going to debate today, will be considered by our policy makers and legislators to help them craft the legislative framework in due course, if required.

The theme illustrates the Commonwealth Youth Parliament, which focuses on the future of young Caymanian parliamentarians, to assist and generate ideas for consideration for policy implementation; undoubtedly, the Parliament fosters and ensures the exercise of good governance, and it is an environment that is conducive for networking, which will inevitably enhance leadership and effective communication skills tailored to develop the future of our younger generations and, as you all probably can attest, it's also character building for our youth.

Today's Youth Parliament comprises sixteen Youth Parliamentarians ranging from the ages of 14 to 20. As our parliamentarians for the day, and possibly many of you sitting here today will be the future government and legislators, your impact and contributions will be felt not only locally, but regionally. This experience will be a pedestal for greater things in your life and by extension a benefit to the entire country, so rest assured that your contributions will be relied on.

For that reason, I encourage you all to continue to express your concerns not just today, but by familiarising yourselves with the draft legislation that the Government distributes for public consultation. The

skills that you have developed from Youth Parliament will equip you now to make future and meaningful contributions. I would also like to challenge all of you to get acquainted with the Cayman Islands Law Reform Commission's website, where your input will influence changes to reform or enact legislation in our country.

With that, I sincerely wish all of you the best in your deliveries and contributions to this Youth Parliament as you debate these two motions.

Thank you.

**Mr. Joseph Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:**

The Honourable Madam Speaker having already very well established the protocols for the morning, it leaves for me to say, good morning and welcome to you, the Youth Parliamentarians, the reason we are all together this morning. I am certainly honoured to address you today on behalf of the Opposition and that of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Roy McTaggart, who is off island and unable to be here this morning.

Your hard work has paid off and shortly you will begin to debate two very interesting motions. I am sure you must be a bit excited, perhaps even a bit nervous, but I have no doubt you will all do well. I know that your families— and I am so happy to see so many parents here today— are very proud of you, so sincere congratulations to you, from myself and all of my colleagues in the Opposition, on participating, and I'm sure successfully preparing, for today.

*Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future* is the theme of Commonwealth Day 2023. That is a lofty goal, a goal that includes a focus on building a better future for our citizens under the age of 30.

According to the Cayman Islands 2021 Census Report, we have about 23,000 people living on these Islands below the age of 30. That age group obviously includes all of you, your friends and your siblings. This goal is about all of your futures. That realisation should help to make this a more purposeful and meaningful morning.

As a part of today's commemorations, young people here and across the Commonwealth raised their flag for peace. I hope that this act by our youth comes to mean, more than a commemoration of the day, an appreciation that as young people, as our future leaders, you have the capacity to make a difference; the ability to help make your world and your lives better by the choices that each of you make. This is more than words for me as I genuinely believe, and therefore, so should you.

You may be too young to understand what Hurricane Ivan was like. Many of you may not have been born in 2004 but you have heard the stories; however, each of you has come to learn what a global pandemic can do— how a microscopic organism that we cannot see turned our world upside down over the past two years.

Young people, you had your world and your lives disrupted. Nonetheless, your presence here today

indicates the resiliency of our youth and our community. You refused to be defined by that virus. Instead, you were determined to be defined by your strengths, your spirit, your character and the ability to rise above challenges. You chose resiliency over giving up. Our common future depends on all of us being resilient.

We all know it, but you, our younger people, certainly understand the need to be better stewards of our planet. We live on low-lying Islands, so climate change and its various impacts can be especially disastrous to all of us, so we must do our best to reduce the risk of a warming planet if we are to have hope for any sort of positive common future. Your motion calling for a modern public transportation system shows that you understand this concern.

Fewer cars on our roads will mean less carbon dioxide polluting the atmosphere and helping to warm the planet. We cannot have a sustainable common future if we do not treat our earth better. Fewer cars on our roads would also lessen traffic congestion by cutting back the long hours many of us now spend driving between home, school and work. It must have a positive effect on our lives.

If you live in the eastern districts, you understand the traffic frustrations first-hand. A properly conceived, reliable public transport system that reduces traffic and provides options for owning your own car, will improve the quality of life for all of our citizens. Not only can we avoid the high cost of vehicle ownership, but dramatically reducing the traffic congestion we now experience, will ease the frustrations of commuting, especially as I said, for those of you in the eastern districts. We cannot have a sustainable common future without paying attention to the quality-of-life concerns that we face today.

In raising the flag of peace today, I hope you took a moment to think about the many places across our globe where conflicts are occurring. Conflicts where great suffering is inflicted on innocent people, including the young and the old. I hope you also took a moment to appreciate the peace that we have here at our home. We must all do our best to ensure that the future of the Cayman Islands remains as peaceful as it is today and perhaps, maybe even more.

Youth Parliamentarians, I know you understand that we cannot have a common future without appreciating that every human life has value. This means ensuring peace and security here at home, but also working to ensure every Caymanian, especially every young Caymanian, has the best opportunity to have a successful life on our Islands.

The other motion being debated today seeks the implementation of a system of progressive income tax. Whether or not an income tax system is a solution to a better and fairer Cayman Islands, will be contemplated during your debate. Again, I look forward to listening to the arguments put forward on both sides; however, the core of this Motion, at its very heart, is a common goal that all of our people have an opportunity to

succeed in society, live productive lives and raise their families.

It's about opportunity and fairness. We cannot have a common future without a society that ensures that we all have a fair and equal opportunity to improve our lives so yes, both motions debated today are meaningful conversations for our Islands and our people, and the fact that these issues are being debated in our Youth Parliament by our Youth Parliamentarians make for a good lesson for you, and all of us watching and listening.

I will paraphrase the words of the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke at last year's Youth Parliament, it is essential for you to understand that a sustainable and peaceful common future is influenced by many things, but [there's] one thing it is undoubtedly influenced by, and that is politics.

Your participation today, and the topics being debated, indicate that you understand the importance of Parliament, democracy and debate in making our country and our world a better place. Your participation today will hopefully encourage you to be involved in our communities and to take up the mantle of leadership starting today.

I will close by quoting a few lines from a poem by Tupac Shakur where he wrote about change and keeping dreams alive. In his poem entitled *And 2Morrow*, Tupac wrote:

**“Today is filled with anger  
fueled with hidden hate  
scared of being outcast  
afraid of common fate.  
Today is built on tragedies  
which no one wants 2 face  
nightmares 2 humanities  
and morally disgraced.  
But 2morrow I c change,  
a chance 2 build a new.  
Built on spirit intent of Heart  
and ideals based on truth.  
And tomorrow I wake with second wind  
and strong because of pride  
2 know I fought with all my heart  
2 keep my dream alive.”**

Youth Parliamentarians, should you ever feel disheartened, remember those words. Gather your second wind, rise strong and work hard at keeping your dreams alive, and making your world, our world, a better place.

I wish you all the absolute best as you debate these two fascinating motions, and I thank you for the considerable time you've invested in this important project.

I would also like to recognise and thank the Clerk and all of her colleagues, who have worked in arranging this programme and helping, along with all of our political colleagues, to prepare you for today; and of course I thank the parents and guardians and teach-

ers, who have encouraged you and helped you to prepare for today. It leaves me to say have a wonderful day, Youth Parliamentarians, but also enjoy yourselves.

I look forward to listening to your debates and conversing with you at the end. Enjoy, and best of luck—and May the Lord bless these three Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton, Minister for Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Joint Vice-President of the CPA Cayman Islands Branch:** Madam Speaker, wearing your hat as President this morning, I want to join in thanking you very much for establishing protocol and welcoming all who are here. I want to wish you all a very, very warm good morning.

I'd particularly like to extend welcome to all of our Youth Parliamentarians, their families, friends and supporters; those within Government and those Members of Parliament who have been working assiduously to help you all prepare to be here today and to make this day happen. I am sure that you will do yourselves, your families, and your country, very proud.

As Premier, I am proud to be welcoming you all here to this the 16th Youth Parliament in Cayman. I can honestly say, that standing in this House of Parliament in front of our next generation of leaders is always an exciting experience. The occasion is also an opportunity to discuss and reflect on the designated Commonwealth theme for 2023, fittingly named "Year of Youth".

It's difficult to accept that an entire year has passed since we last hosted Youth Parliament, however, I know that many of you have been working very diligently over months, sacrificing your time in preparation for today's auspicious event. Trust me, your dedication and commitment does not go unnoticed. It is very much appreciated. Every year we hold this Youth Parliament on Commonwealth Day, the second Monday of March, in celebration of unity, diversity, and most importantly, our aspiring young leaders who are present here today.

Many of you may be at your stage in life where you're facing what some psychologists call generativity versus stagnation. A developmental psychologist by the name of Dr. Erik Erikson identifies this as the seventh of eight stages of psychosocial development.

The battle between generativity and stagnation at your age, comes from a desire to do well and leave a meaningful mark in the world. It means you are generative. You want to leave this world in a better place than the state in which you found it. We in Government, and all Members of this Parliament, share that view; however, many young people struggle to see how they can make a true difference. They sometimes feel stuck and they feel they do not know their purpose yet.

My message to you young people today is: Do not worry if you feel that you don't yet know your purpose. At your age, I was certain that I had no interest in being a lawyer; I ended up doing it for thirty years.

I was even more certain that I would *never* become a politician. Look how that worked out.

*[Laughter]*

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton:** It fills me with hope to see so many of our young people here today being generative, being in touch with issues that are important to our society such as climate change, the cost of living and affordable housing, to identify just a few.

Many false assumptions are made at times, that young people do not recognise their role in society, and that they are not necessarily contributing to improving society, but you are here today to demonstrate that it is a false view, a false assumption. You are clearly here today, and I am sure that with the quality of the debate and the contribution and the arguments you will be making today on these really important issues, you will demonstrate that you have a very keen understanding of how these issues impact the quality of your lives, the lives of everyone here today, and also the future generations'.

I think I can confidently say standing here today, that to underestimate our youth is a grave mistake. They must have a voice today because they, you all, have far more invested in the future than we are trying to create. You have more future invested than we do.

Many should view a lack of youth participation as a core problem of institutional politics. I want to say that this Government has adopted a core policy of practising diversity as far as possible which includes trying to ensure, at all times, that the views of young people are represented at every opportunity, which brings us to why we are here today.

The first of the two Motions— Implementation of a Progressive Tax System in the Cayman Islands — with the intent of resolving wealth disparity, socioeconomic inequality and disproportionate effects to lower-income households, is a very laudable attempt at addressing these issues.

I respect this well-thought-out Motion centred on principles of economic distribution, and I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Abbey Walton, Elected Member for West Bay West, for moving the Motion. I'm very keen to hear the proposals on how a progressive income tax may be implemented and maintained in our Islands, as opposed to the system of indirect, consumption-based tax that we have in place. I hasten to add that this interest is from an intellectual perspective.

*[Laughter]*

**The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton:** It is certainly not unbeknownst to the Government and members of our wider society, that the cost of living is considerably high. It remains an issue, and I am impressed that this Motion is being brought as a means to improve access to education, housing and healthcare— goals that are outlined in our existing Strategic Broad Outcomes and Objectives to promote economic recovery across our Islands, and the continued safety of our people.

The Youth Government is bringing the second Motion, Implementing a New Public Transport System in the Cayman Islands, clearly a very topical issue for the Government as we work to address the traffic problem, and promote more sustainable modes of transport, so we're absolutely looking forward to your contributions on how we can go about developing a fully functioning, reliable transport system. It is something that is very high on our agenda so clearly, your contributions will be significant and important to take into account. Remember I said as young people, your views are critically important to this country as well, because you have more invested in the future than we do.

I would like to thank Miss Elizabeth Thomas, Elected Member for George Town Central for moving this Motion. I wouldn't be surprised at all if the existing Member for George Town Central had something to do with that.

I would also like to thank Youth Parliament Premier and Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, Miss Lili Anne Aleria; Youth Parliament Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun; and Speaker, Ms. Shanell Martinez for their service of leadership to this group. It is overtly clear that your voices, along with your fellow Youth Parliamentarians, create an overwhelming force to be reckoned with.

You are working towards changing and taking control of a future that you, your children, and your grandchildren will inherit. You made a choice to use your time to fight for your future, and this is deeply rooted in the passions that you hold and the care that you have to improve the lives of others. You have the responsibility to maintain hope in the face of adversity which will only serve to grow and develop you as young leaders and as change makers.

I don't want to speak for much longer, but certainly I am very interested and looking forward greatly to hearing from you today.

Let me conclude by saying that the rest of Government and I are extremely appreciative of your participation; all of the efforts you have put into this so far, and to hear the proposals, the debate, the cut and thrust, as they say, of the arguments.

Youth Parliament, as always, involves Members of the Government and the Opposition coming together to help teach our future leaders the nuances of Parliament and the making of legislation, the implementation of policy, and helping our students prepare for their debates and presentations. I thank those Members for their dedication to our young politicians.

I also thank the staff of Parliament and everyone else behind Youth Parliament who have guided you all through the process and helped make today possible.

To those of you who are here to observe these proceedings, it is now certainly my distinct pleasure and honour to turn this Chamber over to this incredible assembly of bright, Caymanian young people and aspiring politicians, as I declare this 16th Youth Parliament of the Cayman Islands officially open.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

*[Pause]*

*[Hon. Shanell Martinez, Speaker, presiding]*

**The Speaker:** This honourable 16th Youth Parliament is now in session.

I will ask the Honourable Premier to say prayers.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Elected Member for George Town East:** *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.

## READINGS BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

**The Speaker:** Good morning, everyone. Before I go ahead with my messages, I would just like to applaud the fact that during Women's Month we have two young, strong women leading both our Government and our Opposition.

[Applause]

**The Speaker:** Not only that, but both of our Motions are being moved by two strong, lovely women.

[Applause]

**The Speaker:** Fellow Youth Parliamentarians, His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper, OBE, Honourable Members of Parliament, parents, teachers, students and invited guests: Welcome to the 16th Annual Youth Parliament debate.

*Forging a Sustainable and Peaceful Common Future*, the theme for this year's Commonwealth Day, speaks volumes. Commonwealth Secretary General, the Rt. Hon. Patricia Scotland, KC, describes the theme as an active commitment of Member states to collaborate on climate action; support the development of free and democratic societies, and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all commonwealth citizens. Without a doubt, this is what today is about.

Today, the Youth Parliament Government is here to tackle an issue that our country faces daily—traffic. The Government's Motion, Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands, seeks to expedite the traffic issue and introduce solutions to the many vehicles on our roads.

The Honourable Premier believes that the public transportation motion will decrease the number of cars on island, reduce the dependency on cars, create a reliable public transportation system and ensures people will be safe. If passed, this Motion promises that the system will be affordable, cost-efficient, sustainable, and that over time, it will put a stop to the traffic virus.

On the other hand, the Opposition's Motion, Implementation of a Progressive Income Tax System in the Cayman Islands, seeks to provide solutions to the high cost of living in Cayman and encourages a stronger equity of wealth for all Caymanians. In the words of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, *this Motion was chosen because the Opposition has recognised that wealth disparity and income inequality is an issue in our Islands*. If passed, the Motion will stem the tide of financial strain on lower income households.

The Motions brought to this Honourable Youth Parliament today, show that the youth of our Islands are

not oblivious to the issues which affect our community. They see what is happening and they have ideas, they have solutions; ways to better our Islands and sustain them for years to come.

As I end my speech, I would like to quote Indian revolutionary Mahatma Gandhi who said, "**The future depends on what we do in the present.**" This can translate to simple things like studying and doing your homework now, sets you up for a good GPA [Grade Point Average] in the future; preparing your bag the night before will allow for less stress in the morning. What we do now affects the future.

The Laws we pass today affect the societies of the future, and if you've ever wondered what the future of the Cayman Islands looks like, just look up in the gallery at our students; or better yet, look in front of you at our Youth Parliamentarians. It's bright, isn't it?

I encourage the audience to listen. If you're here in the audience, watching on television or listening by radio, listen carefully. These speeches are not just facts and opinions, but the ability for the youth to forge a sustainable and peaceful common future for these Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

## OTHER BUSINESS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

#### PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 1 OF 2023 IMPLEMENTATION OF A PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX SYSTEM IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

##### Suspension of Standing Order 32(4)

**The Speaker:** Before I recognise the Elected Member, I would like to explain to the public that due to the fact that Bodden Town is our fastest growing constituency and there are more Youth Parliamentarians than current constituencies, we broke it up into three separate areas.

I now recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas, Elected Member for Bodden Town Central:** Madam Speaker, good morning.

Before we start the debate on Private Member's Motion No. 1, I would like to move a motion to suspend Standing Order 32(4) to allow Members of this honourable House to read their speeches.

**The Speaker:** Is there a seconder to the Motion?

I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.



**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr., Minister of Education, and District Administration & Lands, Elected Member for North Side:** I beg to second the Motion.

**The Speaker:** The Motion is, that Standing Order 32(4) be suspended to allow Members to read from their speeches.

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

**AYES.**

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

**Agreed: Standing Order 32(4), suspended.**

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Elected Member for West Bay West.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition - Elected Member for West Bay West:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023: Implementation of a Progressive Income Tax System in the Cayman Islands, which reads as follows:

**WHEREAS it is acknowledged that there is no current income tax system in the Cayman Islands;**

**AND WHEREAS the strength of divides between socioeconomic class income in the Cayman Islands disproportionately disadvantages lower-income households;**

**AND WHEREAS wealth disparity in the face of high prices for food, housing and utilities could have a destabilising impact on the economy and quality of life for middle and low income Caymanians;**

**AND WHEREAS low income households are disproportionately impacted by a high cost of living;**

**AND WHEREAS implementation of a progressive style of income tax can improve access to education (early childhood through to tertiary), housing, healthcare, safety nets, and security for the Caymanian population;**

**AND WHEREAS in order to tackle socially-corrosive issues like inequality and wealth disparity, the Cayman Islands needs to create an economy distributive in nature;**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT this Honourable Youth Parliament considers the implementation and maintenance of a progressive income tax system that encourages stronger equity of wealth for all Cayman Islands' citizens.**

**The Speaker:** Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023 has been duly moved. Is there a seconder to the Motion?

I recognise the Leader of the Opposition, the Elected Member for Newlands.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition - Elected Member for Newlands:** Madam Speaker, I beg to second Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023.

**The Speaker:** The Motion has been duly moved and seconded. Does the mover wish to speak to the Motion?

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

First of all, I'm beyond thankful that we live in a society where our Government supports our people to such an extent. Thanks to our Government, the Cayman Islands is a great place to live for many people. We have sound law and order, well developed infrastructure and are renowned for being one of the largest offshore financial paradises.

I would be lying if I said our Government hasn't supported the system and the people of the Cayman Islands, however, Madam Speaker, it's what may lie in our society's future that has brought concern to us and is the primary reason why we as the Opposition have put this Motion forward today.

Why don't we look back to March 2020? The Government closed the borders to all airlines and cruise ships. The restrictions on travel, while containing the virus, had significant negative impact on the economy, particularly the tourism sector. Our economy is fuelled mainly by the tourism and finance sectors, together representing 50-60 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) so, with over half of our total GDP being attributable to the tourism and finance sectors Madam Speaker, consider what our Island as a whole would face if we were to lose them.

Yes, our Government introduced a range of programmes and initiatives to support vulnerable people and businesses during this time. The Government's efforts to preserve and protect human lives during the pandemic cannot be denied; but their COVID-19 response had a substantial financial impact during the significant period of time, that we as the Opposition cannot ignore.

Madam Speaker, the response and recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic has adversely impacted the government's finances in the past, and we as the Opposition recognise that in the event of a future pandemic or financial crisis, our Government will have no long-term sustainable revenue streams to protect our most vulnerable residents with risk of insolvency, if we do not put alternative sources of revenue in place to combat this. This is why we are here today, and I hope that we can provide a system for our Government to support itself in the event that we face a crisis such as this again.

Firstly, Madam Speaker, I want to address the sources of our Government's income and why this is the Opposition's primary concern when it comes to the economic stability of our country. Once again, the Government's main revenue streams, the financial services

and the tourism industry, represent 50 to 60 per cent of the country's GDP.

A significant number so, with over half of our total gross domestic product being attributable to the tourism and financial sectors consider, Madam Speaker, the devastation our Islands as a whole would face, if a global crisis forced our borders to close once again. Our Government would be putting pressure on the individuals within our society most vulnerable to the burden of economic shortfalls.

What is our Government's backup plan if we lose our tourism and finance industries?

Madam Speaker, what about the government reserves that have been put in place to support the economy during COVID? Well, the Finance Minister at the time, Hon. Roy McTaggart, said that if the country ran out of reserves before the tourism sector and the world economy recover, the Government may have had to consider taxation.

We need to anticipate that these reserves won't last forever. Are we willing to wait for our financial industry and tourism sector to leave before we have had the chance to safeguard our economy? This is why we are proposing a progressive income tax.

Madam Speaker, we need to start thinking about locally earned sources of government funding and we need to put it in place before we face a crisis. It's not if, it is when, and we need our government to be prepared to support our Caymanian people if we face a crisis again.

I am aware that there is a stigma around the word taxation for many people. I want to be very clear in reinforcing that our Islands are not tax free. A range from 7 per cent to 27 per cent is applied to almost everything purchased, and we need to get rid of the notion that consumption tax here is no tax. This means that for almost everything bought here, whether luxury boats or consumables out of a supermarket, everyone in the Cayman Islands must pay the same consumption tax for everything bought.

Madam Speaker, why would we want to propose a progressive income tax on our people instead of the current form of tax? Well, we see the progressive tax system as a far more equitable and profitable source of revenue. People with different incomes are taxed proportionally so it lessens the tax burden on the poor, and imposes a greater percentage of taxation on the people that can afford to pay more.

How a government taxes its citizens is a direct declaration of a country's values. As our lower income earning citizens struggle with the rising cost of living in our country, the wealthiest and most comfortable elite benefit from a system that holds no jurisdiction over them. The system as it currently stands, levies the same percentages on products or goods purchased regardless of the buyer's income, and is disproportionately difficult on low-income earners in our society. It is equal, but it is not equitable, and we don't think it is right.

I assume that the biggest argument when addressing our Motion will be what may happen to our finance industry if we implement a progressive income tax? Wouldn't higher percentages of income tax on our higher earners drive wealthy foreign investors away—but has our government stopped to consider what may happen if they didn't?

Our government faces the moral decision today of either imposing an income tax on the wealthy that can afford to contribute, or leaving our most vulnerable citizens in instability. Has our government made our economy easy and exploitable for the top? Have they left the majority of Caymanians with financial hardships, that in the case of a crisis our government would have no way to sustainably support on the long term?

To conclude Madam Speaker, please consider the Opposition's efforts to come together in trying to ease the struggles of our community and protect our economy. Our government has an obligation to protect its people, and I hope that they are able to choose the future and wellbeing of their people, over short term wealth and greed.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Financial Services and Commerce.

**Hon. Chloe Reid, Minister of Financial Services & Commerce, and Investment, Innovation & Social Development - Elected Member for West Bay East:**

Good morning, Madam Speaker. I rise to oppose Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023.

Their proposal is to implement a progressive tax system in the form of income tax, however, I believe that the Government does enough for its citizens. Our aim as the Government is to ensure that our citizens are as independent as possible and require little to no government assistance.

Based on the sixth whereas, which states “**and whereas in order to tackle socially-corrosive issues like inequality and wealth disparity, the Cayman Islands needs to create an economy distributive in nature**”, the problem put forth is inequality and wealth disparity and the solution to this issue is to *implement a current income tax system in the Cayman Islands*? I don't believe that this method will solve the problem, Madam Speaker; in fact, it may add to the problem.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister with responsibility for Financial Services & Commerce, and Investment, Innovation & Social Development, it appears as though the Opposition believes that by implementing such a system the low-income earners will be better off, which is just untrue. One only needs to pick up the 2021 census document which reported that 22.4 per cent of Caymanians are making an income of less than

\$28,799 a year, which is approximately two thousand—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, point of order. Evidence for that claim.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, you may continue.

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Which is approximately \$2,399.92 per month— and before any Opposition Member wants to play *froggy* and leap, the evidence is right here.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, the NAU [Needs Assessment Unit] happens to fall within my remit and to put into context the cost of living our island currently sits at, a conservative estimate provided by [livingcost.org](http://livingcost.org) states that one person can live off of \$3,090. In spite of that, my Government has taken great precautions by implementing, and gradually upgrading, the Needs Assessment Unit.

Madam Speaker, that unit, that staff, work diligently to ensure that Caymanians are well taken care of. To be eligible for these benefits at Needs Assessment Unit you must be:

1. Caymanian;
2. Have Caymanian dependants or be married to a Caymanian;
3. Earn an income of less than \$3,000;
4. If you're earning more than \$3000, you must be disabled yourself, or be caring for someone who is disabled.

Madam Speaker, even though NAU is a part of my department [sic] [Ministry] I do not pride myself on needing to have a unit where people are reliant on government assistance to stay afloat.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, implementing a progressive tax system will create a greater social economical divide— which the Opposition claims to be closing— [because] by implementing such a system, the lower class is taxed at a certain percentage based on wages. As soon as they receive a pay raise, the assistance they are used to becomes limited and they are taxed an additional amount based on how much money is over their original salary at a higher percentage. This will leave the people in shock and they would prefer to make less money to receive more benefits and feel more secure. This leaves many of our lower and middle class citizens in a stagnant state.

Madam Speaker, I was told by our very Opposition Members that this Motion was supposed to help

the less fortunate; right now it's looking to me as if it will do more harm than good.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, you see where I am going with this. Over time, this Motion will continue to break down the will for Caymanians to improve and cause our citizens to live in anxiety and fear.

If the Opposition's version of closing the social economic divide is bringing all its people down, then they should rethink their misplaced values and what they genuinely want for this country. By implementing this ludicrous system, the Opposition is basically waiting for the people of today to improve themselves just to be kicked back into the position they were in the first place.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Innovation, this Motion, if put into movement, is going to put our dear verdant Islands' economy into extreme bankruptcy.

To implement a progressive tax system, a form of identification must be in place as the last names Ebanks, Bodden, Whittaker and Scott are just a few examples of names that many Caymanians possess. To have an identification system can cost an estimated \$8 million and can take up to five years, according to [www.CaymanCompass.com](http://www.CaymanCompass.com)

This is an absurd amount of money and time for such a foolish and jocular motion.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** If the Opposition believes that the upcoming identification system is going to suffice, they must have forgotten that the identification system isn't—

### Point of Order

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Relevance.

Nowhere was it stated that we would have an identification system, so I am not sure what the Honourable Member is speaking about.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, please continue your speech.

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, if the Opposition were clear on what a progressive tax system is... there must be an identification system for it to work. Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** I will continue. They must have forgotten that the identification system is *an option* and we as the Government refuse to force our dear members of society to do what they don't want to do.

To be fair, the Opposition's idea to try and fix the cost of living problem is commendable, but this idiocy of a motion is not the way to fix this issue. Say the Opposition's bright idea is put into play—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister your time is up.

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, may I please have a minute or two?

**The Speaker:** You have half a minute.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, where are the people who are proposed to plan all the *nitty gritty* of the taxes coming from? When are they going to receive the time to spend with their families? How long are these very people going to take to come up with just a plan?

Madam Speaker, I understand that the Opposition are dedicated to the Cayman Islands as much as we are, but they must take into consideration their own workers who are also part of the wider community. These people have a social life or a family to stand by and it's simply not fair for them to be putting so much effort into a system that is very unlikely to succeed.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Madam Speaker, the Opposition has made it clear that the progressive tax system will be deducted directly from incomes instead of company tax; unfortunately, they have not thought about the many loopholes that can be used to avoid these fees.

Madam Speaker, it is as simple as changing the payment—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your thirty seconds are up. Please be seated.

**Hon. Chloe Reid:** Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay Central.

**Miss Lorlie Bryan, Elected Member for West Bay Central:** Good morning, Madam Speaker.

You know, as a matter of fact Madam Speaker, it is not a good morning, because I am here today to

inform you all about how our lower income class citizens are extremely impacted by the high cost of living here in the Cayman Islands.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** Now, it is no secret that Cayman is very expensive. Growing up, it is something that has always been known; the cost of living in the Cayman Islands is on average 44.3 per cent higher than in the United States, and is expected to continue to increase in 2023. The Consumer Price Index published—

### Point of Order

**Hon. Keira Boddan:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Can we please get evidence?

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** May I ask that when you stand to give a Point of Order, you wait until you're recognised. Thank you.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, you may continue.

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** The Consumer Price Index published by the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) states that the prices of goods [and services] in the first quarter of 2022, were higher by 11.2 per cent compared to the first quarter of 2021. Such rate increases will be challenging for all Caymanians, particularly low-income Caymanians already on or near the financial edge.

Now my question is, Madam Speaker, does the Government wish to push us off this edge?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** There is a large and growing gap between the rich and poor and this gap continues to widen, making it even more difficult for lower income households to keep up with the cost of living. Higher income households have more disposable income to cover their expenses, which means they can afford to live in more expensive neighbourhoods, buy healthier foods, and pay for better quality services. Wouldn't it be nice Madam Speaker, if all our Caymanians could afford to live with these luxuries?

The cost of rent or mortgage payments is incredibly high which makes it difficult for lower-income households to afford decent housing. The housing and utilities division showed a **“14.2 per cent increase as the index for water supply had a 53.4 per cent increase. The cost of electricity also rose by 41.9 per cent compared to the same period in 2021. Imputed rentals for owner-occupiers increased by 5.9 per**

**cent, actual rentals paid by tenants went up by 6.9 per cent”.**

I'm sure we can all agree that Cayman is a very beautiful place. Having been born and raised in the Cayman Islands, I have experienced all its beauty, and it is a place I would love to spend the rest of my life in, but if prices continue to rise like this, Madam Speaker, I will be living with my mother forever and—

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** I don't know about you, but I would like to own a house someday.

The lack of affordable housing is not only impacting young Caymanians but is a contributing factor to income inequality. When lower income households are unable to afford decent housing, they are often forced to live in inadequate accommodations. This can make it even more difficult for them to improve their economic situation and can perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

In addition, upcoming interest rate increases will affect residents' ability to borrow from local banks. How can we expect Caymanians to live their lives here knowing that they will no longer be able to afford loans they only need in the first place because the cost of living is so high?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** For all those who fall over the financial edge due to the foregoing cost of living hikes, there are limited resource options.

Now while some people avoid losing their house, or may be able to get a meal during difficult times, it is unacceptable— and I repeat, *unacceptable*— for us to go on allowing our Caymanians to live like this.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** Given the circumstances and projections, it is now urgent for a long-term sustainability plan to be presented and discussed. A possible solution: Progressive Income Tax.

This system imposes a heavier tax burden on those who can afford it, while providing relief to those who are struggling to make ends meet. This can be used to reduce income inequality by redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor.

In conclusion, we have established that lower income households are disproportionately impacted by the high cost of living. Income inequality, housing costs and food prices, are some of the factors that contribute to this disproportionate impact. Less equal societies have less stable economies.

Bridging the gap between the rich and the poor will not only significantly help the poor, but would also help the whole island. It is crucial that we work together

to address these issues and find solutions that can help lower-income households access affordable housing, healthy food and other basic necessities. By doing so, we can create a more just and equitable society for all.

As I leave today, I would like to leave you with a quote, **“Equality means nothing unless incorporated into the institutions”** — Slobodan Milošević.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr., Minister of Education, and District Administration & Lands - Elected Member for North Side:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am glad and proud to be speaking in the 16th Annual Cayman Islands Youth Parliament, if that's whose Youth Parliament this even is anymore.

This Opposition plans to present a Motion to implement income tax, *tax*, into our Cayman Islands. Not only is this an outrageous and honestly chuckle-some proposal to anyone who has the slightest idea as to how our economy works, but they also seem to have grossly underestimated just how much this country does and can do for its citizens without tax being implemented.

I surveyed a population of the Cayman Islands to get their feedback on this Motion, and found that the response was overwhelmingly against; over 80 per cent of the respondents stated that they were either against or strongly opposed to this Motion with a—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

### Point of Order

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Point of Order. Evidence.

**The Speaker:** Do you have evidence?

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Yes, Madam Speaker, it is available online and I can present it to the Member if they would like.

**The Speaker:** Can I see the evidence?

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, please continue.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you.

In the comments under the survey, one of the respondents even stated that they thought that the robberies going around would increase due to this. Now, Madam Speaker, I don't think that the robberies of shops in local areas around Cayman will increase due to the passing of this Motion. The only robberies I see taking place, is the robbing of the wealth of our people.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** As one of the members of my constituency in the beautiful district of North Side stated, *"Taxes? That's literally the first thing I brag about not having when I tell people I from Cayman."*

I speak as a Minister, and also as a representative of my community, when I ask the Opposition to remember which country they are serving, as our lack of [income] tax here on Island is a source of pride for our Caymanians, and the reason that foreigners move here. The Cayman Islands are one of the few countries in the world to have the luxury of not having to rely on taxing our citizens in order to have a stable government and economy, and I think it is ludicrous that this Opposition would ever try and change that.

In proposing a motion that the majority of Cayman has shown to be against, the Opposition seems to have forgotten one thing I would like to remind them of, as the Minister of Education: It is their fundamental job to be the voice of the people. In proposing such a motion that the people have stated they are vastly and widely against, they have failed this job Madam Speaker. This is not what they are supposed to be doing as the voice of the people.

### Point of Order

**Miss Abygale Elliott, Elected Member for George Town South:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. The Member is misleading the public. Can he retract the statement?

**The Speaker:** I remind you to please wait until you are acknowledged before you state a Point of Order or Point of Elucidation.

Can the Honourable Minister please continue his speech?

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Now, one thing that I do find a bit dreary as some would say, is that the honourable Opposition has not looked at alternative solutions to the problems that they have identified in this Motion. It is clear they brought this forward as something that, as the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition stated, was an emergency response in the past.

Why are we bringing forth something that was an emergency response as something we must put in place now, especially when this Government currently has a surplus thanks to our current economic system

which is threatened by this Motion, and which all of the Ministers here are willing to use to help identify and tackle the problems identified in this Motion?

Moving on, as some of my fellow Members of Government will soon point out, the Cayman Islands' economy is set up in such a way that our lack of any tax attracts foreign investors; at least our lack of direct tax, as I am sure the Opposition will remind us, which contributes to the funds that our country can use to help our people and improve our country. It's the very system that lead Cayman to having the surplus that I mentioned earlier.

An argument I hear coming all the way from East End is, *"Madam Speaker, this is income tax, not company tax"*, and I must confess that this was the exact thing I thought for at least two seconds before I thought it through. You see, income tax does not just affect the individuals making an income, but the companies and organisations that they work at as well. This includes and is vastly made up of foreign investors which contribute to our economy.

There are multiple studies showing how income tax affects companies negatively, some of which are online and some which I have provided here if the Opposition would like to see them. To switch from how our current economy is set up to have taxation, is something that I don't think is necessary and should not be implemented. This is why I will be voting against this Motion.

Furthermore, this Motion will disrupt Cayman's current economy; it will actually make our economy less distributive in nature than it already is. Let me explain, before anyone gets up on another Point of Order.

How our current system is set up is so that wealthy foreign investors are attracted to come into the island and invest into our country. Because of this, we are not reliant on having to propose or implement income tax on our citizens. This means that lower and middle-class Caymanians and in fact, all Caymanians, as well as the expats and permanent residency holders who move here, do not have to pay income tax.

What this means is that the ultra-wealthy, the foreign investors—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your time is up.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** May I get an additional 30 seconds to finish my speech?

**The Speaker:** You may.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you.

What this means is that the wealthiest of our society contribute the most, while the middle and the least currently do not have to give up what little wealth they already have.

I would like to close off this speech by reminding the people here today of the history and the culture of the Cayman Islands and who we are: The last time

the people of Cayman had to pay tax, half of them could not, Madam Speaker, because they were slaves.

Thank you.

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town West.

*[Pause]*

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez, Elected Member for Bodden Town West:** Good morning, Madam Speaker.

Continuing on from what my fellow Member has said, the problem of income inequality as well as the cost of living has had a detrimental effect on the Caymanian population, and continues to be one of the biggest issues on Island. It has been a topic of great discussion with few solutions actually being proposed, even having the Honourable Premier Wayne Panton commenting on how the middle class is under assault— yet little to nothing has been done to meaningfully help.

In order to help the citizens of the Cayman Islands, we must create an economy that is distributive in nature. For those who are familiar with economics, it is pretty well known that with an unregulated free market, yes, it may encourage business growth; however, it allows the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer.

We currently live in a country where people own mansions, whilst your average Caymanian is \$600-\$800 short on meeting their basic needs.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** This dilemma could easily be solved if we had a government that Caymanians could rely on, a government that Caymanians could depend on for financial security, a government that would be willing to take that extra step.

In order to achieve this, we as the Opposition are proposing a progressive income tax— but don't worry, we're not trying to make you file your taxes up 'til midnight. What we are proposing is a payroll tax whereby half of the percentage taken out of your salary will be paid off by the employer. This would not only have you lose a bit per month instead of a huge payment—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** I do not give way.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** You may continue.

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** This would be done with you not only losing a bit per month, instead of a huge payment every couple of months, but it would be done with you having to do virtually nothing.

Also, before I get the comments on how this may work theoretically, but how about in practice. Bermuda is quite literally doing the exact thing that I am proposing. An overseas—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

#### Point of Elucidation

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** I do.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Does the Honourable Member think it is appropriate to implement a system used by Bermuda when they have just complained about the high cost of living in Cayman, [yet] Bermuda actually has a much higher cost of living than even the Cayman Islands?

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** Point of Order. Evidence.

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** A laptop is not evidence.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** May I ask the Honourable Minister to please be seated? Thank you.

Please continue your speech.

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** Bermuda is quite literally doing the exact thing that I am proposing. They are a British Overseas Territory with a similar landmass and similar population and they are doing better than us economically— and I didn't tell you, Madam Speaker, but supposedly, they also have a better public transportation system than us.

*[Laughter]*

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** It would be very nice for the Government to take a page or two out of Bermuda's book.

I also feel the need to put an emphasis on the word *progressive* in progressive income tax, as in: If you are a Member of the middle or lower class, this will benefit you greatly.

I understand that the pressure on the upper class may be alarming to some, as they may think it would affect business activity; however, if you look at it from a logical perspective, since you're being taxed on a monthly basis, it wouldn't affect your demand that much if you're planning big purchases. If you were to be \$50 shorter than usual, it wouldn't affect your buying a car that you've been saving for the past two years, but—

**The Speaker:** Due to time, may I ask the Honourable Minister of Education to please be seated? Thank you.

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** I know the Government is going to look at this from a worst-case scenario point of view, so I will do it for them.

Let's say luxury products drastically fall in demand and businesses are on the decline. Oh, do I have a fun fact for you! *The exact thing is going to happen if prices keep going up.*

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** Although we may not be in a recession at the moment, let's not forget that our tourism industry is just recovering; it was suffering just a moment ago, and to remind the Government, the tourism industry makes up a quarter of our economy, so if prices keep going up, people aren't going to be buying as many luxury goods, businesses will be on the decline, and we may just enter a recession.

The only difference between these two scenarios is that with our tax revenue we'd be able to gain funds for the Government to provide grants and subsidies, with the condition that businesses must lower prices. Although the immediate effect may cause demand for some products to drop, over time the middle class would have a much larger disposable income to strengthen the markets of many more businesses on island.

The Government may say something like, *but we aren't in a recession now, are we?* What the Government fails to understand is that this is not a question of whether a recession is going to happen but when, as our economy does not function like a linear graph where less income equals a recession, but rather a cycle where no matter the occasion, there will be recessions and there will be recoveries, and it is our job as leaders of this country, to be able to provide for Caymanians, so when these recessions do come, we are able to aid them the best we can.

If the government refuses to pass this Motion, they are openly stating that they would value short-term profits over the very lives of our Caymanian citizens—and just a gentle reminder to the Government, Madam Speaker: Unlike some of them, I was not elected because I was the man that “knew business”; I was not elected because I bought everyone in my constituency a stove. I was elected for the stances I took and the calls to action I made, so—

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** I am sorry that they may not like this Motion, but I would much rather push for a solution to a pressing problem—

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, your time is up.

[Laughter]

**Mr. Christopher Sanchez:** May I ask for an additional 30 seconds?

**The Speaker:** Due to time I will ask that you please be seated so that we can move on. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town East.

[Pause]

**Miss Mia Groves, Elected Member for Bodden Town East:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As our national crest says, *“He hath founded it upon the seas”*, I am sure you all have heard of the *Wreck of the Ten Sails*. Nearly all of the stories end with a tax-free Cayman Islands as a result of the people's bravery and it has carried on from the 1900s.

Although there is no corporate tax system in the Cayman Islands, there are duties on goods imported that usually range from 7 to 42 per cent including cars, groceries and clothes. If we tax the rich unreasonably more than the lower incomes, it would be unjust.

For example, why would a person work a 100-hour week for us to take away 70 per cent? It would cause motivation to work less and create lower economic output; furthermore, people would be disincentivised to work harder and go to higher tax brackets. What sense does it make to work 100-hour weeks to get paid the same after tax as someone working 50 hours? At the same time, this can stimulate high income overseas and dodge taxation completely, but has an opposite result as we do not receive anything.



Madam Speaker, in preparation for this debate, I consulted my constituents of Bodden Town East and we support the Government's stance in objecting this Motion.

Taxation would have a negative impact in our society from our tourism sector to our education system. It would also increase our crime rate, as many are struggling in our current economy; as the majority of products are imported into our Islands, many businesses would be gravely affected— and Madam Speaker, have we forgotten the effect that COVID has had? The current Government has taken steps to alleviate the duty costs in pampers, baby formula, and supplies.

With the cost of living increase, many citizens of the Cayman Islands have not seen an increase in salaries to even match the country's 12 per cent, yet you deem it necessary to add further expense by cost to those who are already finding it hard to make ends meet. This will only cripple our economy further and make persons more dependent on us as the Government, through our NAU programme, which is already over extended.

I ask the Opposition: When you look at our education system, with nearly 3,000 plus graduates who come out of school yearly with no job experience, those unable to further their education, how would they be able to meet such taxation? This is neither realistic, possible, nor viable in our country.

As a Member of this honourable House of Parliament, and Government, I take my stance to not vote in favour of this Motion, as it will have a negative impact on us and future generations of these Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Elected Member for George Town South.

*[Pause]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we cannot throw away this chance of equity and growth for the country. The Opposition for this honourable Youth Parliament has brought progressive income taxes to the table. I am sure you must be wondering, what proof do you have that it will work in Cayman? For generations there has been no personal experience with direct taxes.

I understand. There is clearly a stigma surrounding the word taxes as we often stigmatise what we do not understand, and we will not understand until it is explained, so today I am here to give you examples of how the progressive system of income tax could work in Cayman.

Firstly, I must say that I know many love the idea that there are no direct taxes, especially because of how much the economy depends on corporate firms, but Madam Speaker, having a progressive income tax would not drive these firms away because we do not intend for there to be any corporate tax, any land tax or any other form of direct tax, except—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order. The Member is misleading the House; the Government has already proven that income tax negatively affects businesses such as the corporate firms, which serves as a disincentive for them to come or stay here.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, you may continue.

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** I am sure this will come as a shock to the people because many things that are new often do. Madam Speaker, I just hope that the Government of this honourable Youth Parliament can put away any misconceived ideas they may have about taxes.

As there is no current system of progressive income tax in Cayman, we have to look to other states. Let us examine the bands in the UK. There is a basic rate, a higher rate, and an additional rate of taxation. There is also a personal allowance band which is not taxed. These could be the bands we use in Cayman.

Madam Speaker, as I listened to the Government speak today, I noticed that they feel income taxation is taking away a large sum of someone's pay, when such is definitely not the case. The Elected Member for Bodden Town West stated 70 per cent? Madam Speaker, we need to be for real. We can look at Bermuda's system, those earning less than US\$200,000 annually only pay 1.75 per cent tax, and at the extreme those earning US\$1 million or more will be taxed 10.25 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I am hoping that the Government is able to better understand what a progressive income taxation system looks like. Here's an example of how it could work in Cayman: The personal allowance rate could be zero per cent taxation for those earning under \$72,000 a year, so if you earn less than \$6,000 a month, your income would not be taxed. The basic rate could be two per cent for those earning between \$72,000 and \$100,000 a year. The additional rate could be four per cent for those earning above \$100,000 a year.

Madam Speaker, I understand why people would be hesitant to this system; I understand why the government is hesitant to this Motion— hesitancy is simply history repeating itself.

Madam Speaker, did you know that the UK abolished income taxes in the past simply because the

people strongly opposed? After some time, they were able to reintroduce income taxes, which allowed them to remove import and export duties on more than 700 items. This could be a benefit of this system in Cayman.

Madam Speaker, with all that has been said, I wonder: Are we here really debating this Motion or are we debating change?

When COVID came into the world there had to be so many changes, and they were all for our own good. You may ask, why would we want change? Why would we change the way the economy works? Well, Madam Speaker, I think my fellow Members of the Opposition did a wonderful job explaining [that] the way it currently works, does not work for everyone. We cannot possibly come up with how each income category will be taxed overnight, however, we can all work together in an attempt to increase the equity in Cayman.

Even the blind could see, Madam Speaker that this Motion is the way to go for our country to grow.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Cayman Brac East.

**Mr. Pranav Anu, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East:** Good day, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition plans to implement a progressive tax system into the Cayman Islands. Not only will this Motion fail to solve the wealth disparity and provide a functional distributive economy, but it will make matters even worse. Madam Speaker, this Government finds this Motion ludicrous.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Pranav Anu:** To ensure that there is no confusion, let me be clear: I will be speaking about the impracticality of this Motion for our economy, and how it would affect Cayman's different classes. Many of the middle income and lower income Caymanian's lives would be disrupted significantly by the implementation of progressive income tax.

With the stress of working paycheque to paycheque and coming home to feed their children, the stress of managing their taxes would now be added. This, Madam Speaker, appears to be unfair and even as if we are neglecting our lesser income population. This would put into the minds of our people that our government is truly money hungry and does not—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay North.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Zachary Allen, Elected Member for West Bay North:** Madam Speaker, on a Point of Order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House, and I therefore ask him to retract the statement.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please retract your statement.

**Mr. Pranav Anu:** Yes, ma'am.

Madam Speaker, there's a common belief that progressive income tax is fair to all working incomes. Some even say that it's unfair to the upper income citizens. While on paper, this may be true, but when we look at the real world and how it affected them we can see a whole other result. The poverty rates of countries that have already implemented progressive income tax, such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, are 14.8 per cent or average, with the highest percentage being 18.6 per cent.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Evidence?

**Mr. Pranav Anu:** Yes, ma'am, I have evidence.

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** You may continue your speech.

**Mr. Pranav Anu:** Meanwhile, if we look at the Cayman Islands, we have a poverty rate of only 1.6 per cent. When we take a look at all these numbers, there's a clear observation to be made. All the countries that have implemented progressive income tax have a much higher rate of poverty than that of the Cayman Islands. If progressive income tax is supposed to tackle poverty and wealth inequality, then how come these nations are doing considerably worse than the Cayman Islands? We as the Government take pride in not stealing our citizens' wealth, something the Opposition seems to want to change.

Whilst there are other factors that contribute to the poverty rate of these countries, it is important to acknowledge that progressive income tax is what they all have in common. Our Islands should be proud that our poverty rate is only 1.6 per cent and strive to make it zero, not in the double digits as the rest of the world.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Pranav Anu:** Madam Speaker, although income tax seems enticing at a glance, our Government will be faced with a whole new set of logistics to overcome.

Many times, with progressive income tax follows tax evasion. Tax evasion is the illegal non-payment or underpayment of tax. This is a larger problem than it seems. The whole purpose of implementing a progressive income tax is to make enough income for our economy to have enough money to focus on several projects that may benefit the society.

This idea seems to be very good, but when an insufficient amount of money is coming from tax, how do we fix the problem? This problem is a very common one throughout the world, including America. A tax gap is the difference between true tax liability for a given tax year, and the amount that is paid on time. The Internal Revenue Service [IRS] provided estimates of a tax gap for 2001 of \$345 billion; 2006, \$450 billion; 2008, \$400 to \$500 billion; and 2019, about \$600 billion.

What this leads to is the ultra-wealthy paying virtually no taxes, while the middle class and the less wealthy still have to pay up. Though America is a much larger place than the Cayman Islands, it would be ignorant for us to think that this problem could not occur to us.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the Government is making it explicit as to why implementing a progressive income tax is simply not right for the Cayman Islands. Our Islands have been progressing more than adequately without the implementation of progressive income tax. We have managed to keep poverty rates low in our society, and we should be striving to further decrease the rate, not implement methods that will only increase it.

This also goes for our economy. Where tax may seem to benefit the economy, it inherently hurts it more, whilst affecting society as a whole. Using the knowledge that other countries have already given us from their experience, we can make wise decisions instead of *jumping in with two feet*, making unnecessary mistakes ourselves. We as a country need to work to move forward, not trail further back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Health & Wellness, and Home Affairs.

**Hon. Keira Boddan, Minister of Health & Wellness, and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Savannah:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Today in this honourable House of Parliament I want to ask— as a matter of fact I want to know, what in the world the Opposition is thinking?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Keira Boddan:** Implementation of a progressive income tax in the Cayman Islands sounds preposterous, Madam Speaker. Is the Opposition not thinking about Cayman's future?

The Cayman Islands operates on a consumption tax model, where there's a tax on what people spend, rather than on what people earn. These duty rates vary with items such as high-value vehicles, alcohol, or tobacco attracting a high rate, with basic items such as staple foods, medicine, and certain financial services, attracting a reduced rate or no rate at all. Progressive income tax penalises those who work harder, and can lead to individuals hiding income or assets.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of the proposed policy would increase the expenses of the people. It looks like the Opposition really didn't do their research. They keep comparing the Cayman Islands to Bermuda which just doesn't make sense, as [www.num-beo.com](http://www.num-beo.com) states that Bermuda has a 34 per cent higher cost of living than the Cayman Islands.

The cost of goods in the Cayman Islands are directly affected by external forces. Under the current model, many basic household items attract a low duty rate or none at all, yet the cost of goods continues to rise. With many basic goods attracting no duty at all, the implementation of a progressive income tax system is not going to help lower the cost of these goods, but instead add economic stress on the very people the Opposition is seeking to help.

Many governments make bad decisions because of what they think is politically appealing in the moment, however, this Government is going to ensure that the bad decision the Opposition is imposing will not happen.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Keira Boddan:** Madam Speaker, progressive income taxation can lead to a circle of inflation. The implementation of the proposed policy will increase the expenses of the people. The expenses rise, employees ask for an increase in wages, employers increase their employees' wages—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Point of Order. Evidence?

**Hon. Keira Boddan:** Evidence stating... What do you want evidence of?

*[Laughter]*

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

I would like to see your evidence that a progressive style of taxation inflates our economy. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Keira Bodden:** I just explained it in the speech actually, the cycle of inflation—

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I would like to see physical evidence of that, not just word of mouth. Nor can I accept a digital copy, I need a physical copy or you will need to—

*[Laughter and desk thumping]*

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Retract your statement. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** May I ask the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to allow the Honourable Minister to finish her speech?

**Hon. Keira Bodden:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Implementation of a progressive income tax system in the Cayman Islands will negatively impact the overall economic growth of the country. A progressive income tax system discourages investments and savings which will lead to a decrease in economic activity.

Madam Speaker, the implementation of a progressive income tax system will make the Cayman Islands less competitive in the global market. A higher tax rate will discourage talent and foreign investment from coming into our country.

Madam Speaker, under no circumstances should we be considering a proposal that so threatens the foundation of our economy.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Keira Bodden:** A progressive income tax system can create a disincentive to work and earn more money, as the higher tax rates can reduce the financial rewards of higher income. This can lead to a decrease in overall productivity and economic growth in the long run.

Madam Speaker, I just can't wrap my mind around why the Opposition insists we should have this progressive income tax system, when we receive the benefits of the consumption tax system. In our current consumption based system, individuals are taxed on what they consume and not by how much income they make. This leaves more money available for individuals to save. The American Association of Retired Persons [AARP] policy book indicates that this increase in savings could help to promote greater financial stability and reduce the risk of indebtedness among households [UNVERIFIED].

A consumption tax helps to promote economic growth by encouraging investment and entrepreneur-

ship. With a lower tax burden on businesses and individuals, more resources are available for investment in new ventures and innovative projects which will help to spur economic growth and job creation.

Our current consumption tax provides the government with a consistently growing source of revenue that is used to fund public services, infrastructure and social programmes, so Madam Speaker, so I don't understand why the Opposition sees the need to try to fix a system which is not broken.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition?

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

As my fellow Opposition Members previously stated, we as an Opposition would like to implement a taxation system known as the progressive income tax in the Cayman Islands. Now, in these times when we face extremely high prices and low wages; when people are struggling to make ends meet, when our economy is trying to repair itself, Madam Speaker, we as the Opposition have recognised that more must be done in order to ensure that we move towards a prosperous Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, today we propose a system that will not only benefit this honourable Government, but will most importantly benefit the citizens of the Cayman Islands. To start, it is a known fact that currently the Cayman Islands is a tax-neutral jurisdiction, meaning that there is no imposition of additional tax on capital. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, today it is apparent— we heard it in their speeches, Madam Speaker— that all this Government is focusing on is the negatives. I am hearing negative here, negative there, but Madam Speaker, I come to bring to this Government's attention that gas prices are negative.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** That the cost of a house is a negative, that the cost of the average person's grocery bill is a negative; but Madam Speaker, mathematically speaking, I know that a negative plus a negative equals a positive.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Thus Madam Speaker, today we propose a positive through this progressive income taxation system.

Not only this, but today we recognise that it can be said that the current quality of life in the Cayman

Islands is regressive. Today, we propose a progression through this progressive income tax system. Today, we recognise our roles as Members of the Opposition which is not to oppose solely, but to ensure that our people are catered to and that we as a country, as a nation, as a people, thrive.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Moreover, the implementation of a progressive style of income tax will do many great things for our people and economy. It is without question that the cost of living, especially in the Cayman Islands, is extremely high due to inflation. With the implementation of a progressive style of income tax, these financial strains would significantly lessen.

Madam Speaker, there is a *Cayman Compass* headline that reads, “My mortgage has doubled and a lettuce cost \$7, what’s going on?” Madam Speaker, this is my question as well, as I wonder what is going on with these prices and I know that this is the cry of many consumers also. With the implementation of this Motion, this question would no longer need to be asked.

Madam Speaker, I have to question if this Government is truly considering the benefits of this Motion. Yes, we as the Opposition acknowledge the fact that there would be a huge, ginormous change for the Cayman Islands, but you know what else is a huge change? Having to come home not knowing where the next meal is going to come from.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Can’t afford to pay my mortgage, so I have to live in my car; can’t afford to pay my rent, having to shower in World Gym Fitness just because I don’t have a bathroom— that is a huge change, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** If this honourable Government says no to this Motion, they will be digging our Caymanians into a six foot deep hole, Madam Speaker.

I know that most of us think of the word tax and cringe due to the change that I mentioned, but I invite us all to think of that mother who is struggling to make ends meet. She has a child and she struggles to provide. Madam Speaker, today, we are thinking of that mother and that child and the yearning and desire he or she must have for a comfortable life.

Now, I am going to give you this analogy. I know that most of us here have gotten an immunization shot at least once or twice in our lives. In the stage before the needle meets the skin there is fear, there is anxiety, fear of the pain that may be experienced; after

that pinch, there may be a lingering pain for a little while but after, there is relief. After, there is immunization.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, we understand that there may be some fear before the pinch due to the uncertainties of this Motion, but after, we as an Opposition can *guarantee* that there will be relief. There will be relief of financial strain so that person showering in World Gym Fitness will finally be able to afford a bathroom of their own.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** So that person who is sleeping in their car will be able to sleep comfortably at night; so that person who is struggling to make ends meet will finally have the help that he or she needs.

In closing, Madam Speaker, the implementation of a progressive income tax would eliminate the epidemic of lifestyle issues plaguing the Cayman Islands. It would decrease financial burden, lower the cost of living, and ensure that there is equity—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Leader, your time is up.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Please may I have 30 seconds.

**The Speaker:** You can.

[Laughter]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

And ensure that there is equity of wealth. In addition, a quote by Oprah Winfrey states, “...**the ability to triumph begins with you always**”, so Madam Speaker, today we as Opposition, exercise our ability to triumph as it begins with us, a voice advocating for our people, for our minorities.

We recognise, Madam Speaker that, “*The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight*”, so we do not expect the success of the implementation of our Motion to come overnight; but with hard toil and hard work, we understand that the implementation of this Motion will benefit the Cayman Islands on a whole.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

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

I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance & Economic Development, and Border Control & Labour, Elected Member for Prospect:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise today on this God-given morning to oppose Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Madam Speaker, the people of the Cayman Islands have long boasted a relatively secure economy and financial independence. This all could soon be coming to an end.

Madam Speaker, we have had decades of economic prosperity that has led to locals and foreigners taking advantage of our offshore banking sector and lack of taxation. However, recent proposals by the Opposition are set to change this if put into action.

Madam Speaker, the negative implications such an implementation will mean, should be made clear in order to avoid putting the Cayman Islands' competitive economic edge at risk.

Madam Speaker, simply put, this Motion is laughable, ridiculous even. The Opposition needs to realise that we are not in a Robin Hood fairy-tale. Their proposed solution of taking more from the rich and giving to the poor will not fix wealth disparity or the class divide.

Madam Speaker, this Motion will undermine all that has made our beloved Islands successful, and expose our very Caymanian citizens to potential long term harm; and when we ruin our Caymanians, we ruin our country.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Madam Speaker, by examining the current economic conditions in the Cayman Islands as well as considering how other countries with imposed taxes fare, it will become apparent that taxation has no place here and any implementation of such should be addressed with urgency before further damage is done.

Furthermore, with the imposition of complex taxes and regulations, both businesses and individuals in our country would be put at a financial disadvantage compared to those in countries without such restrictions, for example, the Bahamas and Bermuda. Last time I checked, we are in the House of Parliament for the Cayman Islands, so why is the Opposition trying to tear down our own country and build up others?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Madam Speaker, often the term *tax haven* is used negatively. Tax havens such as the Cayman Islands are attractive for businesses, as they offer no taxation on residents' income, no capital gain tax, and no estate tax.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order.

The honourable Member is misleading the House as we are not a tax haven, but rather a tax neutral jurisdiction and if you would like justification of this claim, I do have evidence to support it.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** For time's sake Madam Speaker, I'll retract that statement for now. I know we got places to be.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** However, the introduction of an income tax system would disincentivise businesses from relocating and investing in the Cayman Islands, thus reducing the inflow of foreign capital and hindering economic growth. Such an income tax would also result in higher tax rates for existing businesses, which could further reduce investment.

Madam Speaker, the proposed tax system would be detrimental to our country due to several reasons. Firstly, the Cayman Islands is a small country with a limited GDP, which means the Islands would not be able to generate sufficient revenue to cover the cost of taxation or any department related to such, whereas funds could be allocated to sectors that actually need funding. Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the introduction of taxes would reduce the level of foreign investment in new businesses and industries.

Additionally, the implementation of this system would lead to an increase in prices, as businesses would pass the cost of taxation on to consumers. This would lead to a decrease in consumer spending which would ultimately lead to a decrease in economic growth. Madam Speaker, if the Elected Member for Bodden Town West or the Leader of the Opposition actually studied basic economics, they would know about inflation— they would know that their proposed system would ultimately lead to this.

Madam Speaker, if we take money from the rich and give to the poor, the poor would have more money to buy more expensive things which means business owners would raise their prices. Alright, we start the cycle again. They take more money from the rich to give to the poor, business owners raise prices, and inflation is the actual raising of prices, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we do not have any industries that would benefit from a personal income tax system. Do you know what we actually have, Madam

Speaker? Our people. We stand in this very House today to fight for the will of the people. Madam Speaker, when a man wakes up every morning at 5:30 just to have 15 per cent of his hard earned income taken from him is when we know as legislators, we have failed our people.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Madam Speaker, what we don't do in the Cayman Islands that has made us so successful, is the fact we do not tax productivity, we do not tax hard work. We reward that behaviour, Madam Speaker.

In conclusion, a tax system in the Cayman Islands is not an ideal solution for narrowing the societal—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for East End:** Point of Elucidation Madam Speaker, is the honourable Member—

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Yo, I don't give way, please.

*[Laughter and desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for George Town South.

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Decorum.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** I apologise. I don't give way. Please sit down.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** In conclusion, Madam Speaker, a tax system in the Cayman Islands is not an ideal solution for narrowing the societal gap between poor and wealthy individuals. We as legislators are responsible for making decisions that impact all citizens of the Cayman Islands, and we should develop policies and initiatives which will actually benefit our citizens.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

If no other Member wishes to speak, I will ask the mover of the Motion to exercise her right of reply.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would first like to thank the Government for their concerns about our proposed system, however I want to, quite fondly, address some of the misconceptions, interesting points and direct quotes made by the Government.

**“The Government does enough for its citizens.”** I would stand to question this, as our lower income citizens struggle with the rising cost of living in our country, where every resident of the Cayman Islands is required by law to have and pay for a minimum health insurance that is notoriously expensive if you are not a Member of the Civil Service;

When according to the Government's own inspection results from the OES [Office of Education Standards] data, 80 per cent of Caymanian students attend schools that do not meet national standards;

When in the past, Parent-Teachers Associations (PTAs) in our government-led schools have cited a lack of resources such as a *“recurring issue with a lack of paper”*.

Our Government stood before us saying, and I quote, **“The government does enough for its citizens”**, when representatives of Parent-Teacher Associations from twelve schools highlighted numerous concerns around behavioural issues, the lack of basic resources in some of the government-led schools, and the perception that good teachers are leaving the system.

Proportional taxation to an individual's income would actually reduce the hardships of our lower income—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I do not give way.

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

It would actually reduce the hardships of our lower income earning community and uplift areas like education because with a stable stream of revenue through our proposed progressive income tax, our government would have sustainable funding to put into these areas.

Our Government said, **“We will not force our society to do what they do not want to do”**, but I would stand to argue that the lack of an honest, transparent, and accountable system like income tax would

only lead to misreporting of business activities and future revenue loss for the Government; that this would come at the expense of the Caymanian public and exploit the middle and lower income earners of our society.

**“No tax; that is the first thing I brag about when I tell people about Cayman.”** As stated before, I want to be very clear in reinforcing that *our Islands are not tax-free*. A range of 7 to 27 per cent is applied to almost everything purchased, so we need to eliminate the notion that local consumption tax is no tax—

[Desk thumping]

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** This means that everyone in the Cayman Islands must pay the same consumption tax for everything bought. Our tax neutral system as it currently stands, does not serve to benefit or protect the lower to middle-income earners of society.

Madam Speaker, our Government is insistent on disregarding our references for a tax system structure because they have highlighted Bermuda’s high cost of living, but... they have a higher GDP. A higher GDP usually indicates how successful they are economically, and thus their ability to provide for the most vulnerable. That is the difference between our countries. Bermuda has the ability to support their society, and we don’t— and that is the bottom line.

[Desk thumping]

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Our Government has claimed that our proposed progressive taxation does not only affect the people it is imposed on but the financial companies that employ them, and I would say that this is very true; but we have to keep in mind that the majority of the financial companies that are employing our Caymanian people already deal with similar tax structures day by day with their overseas entities and clients.

Our Government has also referenced the *Wreck of the Ten Sails* legislation. I want to enlighten our audience and Members that may not be familiar with its history.

The *Wreck of the Ten Sails* is a historic shipwreck that occurred off the East End of Grand Cayman on the 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1794. Historical justification in many contexts should be questioned. Historical justification would also be used to legitimise the separation of race and gender.

I want you to deeply consider that for a moment.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

**Point of Order**

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker, misleading the House. For one thing, the Member is trying to prove that this is the case for something, whereas it is not the basis of the argument that we presented.

We have presented the argument that we should be moving forward into the future and not bringing our system back into systems like the past when we had separations of race; when we did have slavery; when our people suffered because of policies like the one that this Motion is bringing forth from the same people who enslaved us.

[Desk thumping]

**The Speaker:** Please continue your reply.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I would actually choose to argue with that statement because your honourable Minister over there directly used the *Wreck of the Ten Sails* in her debate. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Due to time, I ask you to please be seated. Thank you.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Opinions change, and if we hope to sustainably support ourselves in the future our decisions should not be affected by the weather of the day, but the climate of the era.

This era calls for change; we call for change—our people call for change. We have settled too long with high cost of living. We stood here today to propose a motion that provides a solution to their many economic problems.

How can our Government stand to criticise us on our solutions, when they haven’t provided a single solution of their own?

[Desk thumping]

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** **“Is the Opposition not focusing on our future?”** I would say that so far today we’ve been the only ones in this Parliament that have thought about our future. I haven’t heard a single alternative solution to any of the “whereas” statements that we have brought forward today.

[Laughter]

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

[Laughter]



**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** I hope the Government deeply considers our comprehensively elaborated Motion and puts the sustainability of our Caymanian society before foreign relations. The Government is the representative of the Caymanian people, so I urge them not to make it seem as though their focus lies elsewhere.

Madam Speaker, I want to once again reiterate, the richest percentage of the population is protected by a system that holds no accountability over the people that are most able to pay.

With no property taxes or rates, no controls on foreign ownership of property and land, and no mandates to report personal wealth, the Government has made our economy easily exploitable for the top and has left the majority with difficulty and financial hardships that in the case of a crisis, our Government would have no way to sustainably support on the long term.

If they are fighting for the will of the people I would suggest, with the community's best interest in mind, to find a solution for them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** The question is, be it therefore resolved that this honourable Youth Parliament considers the implementation and maintenance of a progressive income tax system that encourages stronger equity of wealth for all Cayman Islands citizens.

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

**AYES and NOES.**

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** The Noes have it.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, may I have a division please.

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk, please take the division.

#### Division No. 1-2023

**Ayes: 9**

Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun  
Miss Abbey Walton  
Mr. Raldayne Thomas  
Miss Raeann Matute-Scott  
Miss Abygale Elliott  
Hon. Bethany Mitchell\*\*\*  
Miss Lorlie Bryan  
Mr. Christopher Sanchez  
Mr. Zachary Allen

**Noes: 11**

Hon. Lili Anne Aleria  
Hon. Alexander Harris  
Hon. Amani Ebanks  
Hon. Keira Bodden  
Hon. Ashley Ebanks  
Hon. Chloe Reid\*  
Hon. Jelani Hanson  
Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.\*\*  
Miss Elizabeth Thomas

Mr. Pranav Anu  
Miss Mia Groves

**Abstention: 1**

Mr. Christian Campbell

\***Hon. Chloe Reid:** *With a great feeling, No.*

\*\***Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** *No, and I apologise for earlier; I was too tired because the Opposition was taking too long.*

\*\*\***Hon. Bethany Mitchell:** *With passion reinforced, Aye.*

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** The result of the division is 9 Ayes, 11 Noes and 1 Abstention.

**Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 1 of 2023 failed.**

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** The House will now suspend its proceedings for lunch. I ask all Members to return to the Chamber promptly at 1.30 pm.

**Proceedings suspended at 12.47 pm.**

**Proceedings resumed at 1.43 pm.**

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

#### PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION NO. 2 OF 2023: IMPLEMENTING A NEW PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for George Town Central.

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas, Elected Member for George Town Central:** Madam Speaker, I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023: Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands which reads as follows:

**WHEREAS** personal vehicle dependency and traffic problems in Grand Cayman are seriously affecting the lifestyle of the citizens and the environment of the Island;

**AND WHEREAS** the current public transport system and its infrastructure are not adequate to cater to an island of over 75,000 people;

**AND WHEREAS** there are no reliable alternative means of transportation for those citizens who either don't own personal vehicles, are unable to use their vehicles, or simply wish for alternative means of transport;

**AND WHEREAS** the citizens of Grand Cayman are in dire need of a proper and reliable public transport system;

**AND WHEREAS** there is no incentive for persons to decrease the number of personal-use vehicles;

**AND WHEREAS** there is no deterrent to persons owning multiple vehicles;

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** this Youth Parliament Government considers implementing a comprehensive public transport system with reliable infrastructure, features, and incentives.

**The Speaker:** Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023 has been duly moved. Is there a seconder to the Motion?

I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town East.

**Miss Mia Groves:** Madam Speaker, I beg to second Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023.

**The Speaker:** The Motion has been duly moved and seconded. Does the mover wish to speak to the Motion?

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today we are here to discuss a motion that I am proud to be moving regarding public transportation and the traffic congestion that people face every day and which has become part of the routine.

Madam Speaker, we all recognise that traffic congestion is a problem. As a student who enjoys her after school commitments such as Youth Parliament, the problem I am faced with is that I am constantly stuck in traffic on the way to and from school; with the constant stop and go and stop and go, *it's enough to get whiplash*—all caused by the enormous number of vehicles and an insufficient bus system.

Madam Speaker, did you know that it took 27 minutes for the Honourable Deputy Governor to simply catch a bus? Madam Speaker, that is almost half an hour, and it is way too long someone should [have to] wait for a bus; and sometimes it may take longer depending on what time you are trying to catch a bus. That is not the transportation system this current Government wants to support.

Madam Speaker, many problems in this country are caused by traffic congestion. If we take a cautious and serious approach to finding a sustainable solution to the problem within Grand Cayman, it could prove to be a solution to a wider array of problems. Do we want to the simple solution of pumping funding into a dysfunctional transportation system hoping for the best, like what has been done in the past? Yes, Madam Speaker, this problem takes more than funding to solve.

[Desk thumping]

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** I have recognised—and I hope I am not the only one—that the old way of simply building new roads is ineffective and simply not sustainable for the Island's environment and is, in fact, contradicting the Vision 2008 goal which is focused on building more infrastructure forgetting that people still need an efficient way to get to places, especially those who don't have a personal vehicle.

Madam Speaker, the people of the Cayman Islands have voiced their opinion about the issue of traffic congestion and transportation. In an article posted on *Cayman Current*, it is acknowledged that traffic congestion is a problem in Cayman, and suggests that more funding goes into the public transport system. That is fine Madam Speaker, but shouldn't we be looking to the future and finding a more permanent solution? This very Motion will offer other solutions instead of funding or building new highways.

We understand that proposing such a Jurassic change in the way that people on Grand Cayman travel is going to be hard, Madam Speaker, but nothing in life worth doing is easy.

Madam Speaker, everyone can acknowledge the fact that Cayman has a culture where people prefer to drive rather than walk, or take the bus. Why would this not be the case, when outside is hot and the current bus system is broken? This is the mentality we need to get out of. We have to do something about this issue now. We have to come up with a solution which will not only address the issue of the number of personal vehicles on our roads, but also provide a means of transportation other than these vehicles.

We aim to implement a system that all of the public can benefit from, so Madam Speaker, I take immense pride in moving this Motion which will not only allow Cayman's roads to be safer, but will see a decrease of traffic congestion over time. This very Motion's aim is to improve the standard of means of transportation which we have, making it safe, reliable, clean, and cost-effective for the very public we serve.

Madam Speaker, we will present a number of points to this honourable Youth Parliament which I hope will persuade the Opposition Members that this Motion makes sense, and to vote in favour of passing it. We will present information on:

1. The impact to the health and safety of our people;
2. The damage being caused because of the number of cars on our island—which Madam Speaker, there is simply no excuse for the damage we're causing;
3. The infrastructure of our roads and projects in action;
4. The financial side of this Motion;
5. The restriction on importation of vehicles;
6. Productivity loss due to traffic congestion;

7. The repercussions our people are facing due to traffic;
8. Incentives Government will create in order to change the method of transportation;
9. A specific solution to deal with the problem that the people of Cayman are facing, which is a form of proper transportation;
10. Current laws and regulations in place; and finally
11. Important features will be discussed and how Chief Officers are ready to support this Motion.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the sole purpose of this Motion is to better our society and perform our duty as the 16th Youth Parliament, which is to serve the people of the Cayman Islands and ensure that the way of our people is not interrupted simply because of traffic congestion or inability to rely on a bus system.

I hope that those who are listening will not allow politics to get in the way. I implore the Opposition to really think about this Motion and its benefits to the people, and to not take their name too literally and simply oppose.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

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

[Pause]

I recognise the Honourable Premier.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this Government agrees with Private Member's Motion No. 2 and we thank the Elected Member for George Town Central for bringing it to the House. This Government acknowledges that we have a problem with our public transportation system and we are cognizant that our roads are congested.

Firstly, I would like to point out that although this Government inherited this problem, we as a new administration have every intention to fix it. As Premier, I intend to ensure that we take collective responsibility to implement effective solutions and I promise the people of these beloved Isles that this Government will consider all meaningful suggestions and proposals brought to the House today.

Madam Speaker, I also intend to address this Motion from the perspective of Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency and as such, we need to finally come to terms with the fact that Grand Cayman is facing an epidemic. An epidemic that has been affecting the island for decades. We as a Government have taken notice, and we are finally recognising our mistakes and have chosen to acknowledge them.

The quick solution of the hundreds of thousands of cars where we just build more lanes, highways and roads is not one we can use anymore.

For years, Madam Speaker, we have been failing to pinpoint the true root of the problem: Grand Cayman's vehicle dependency. According to an article in the *Cayman Compass* from statistics gathered by various government departments, as of 2019 there were 42,459 roadworthy vehicles registered and 37,406 unlicensed vehicles in the Cayman Islands, meaning that there are nearly 80,000 vehicles for the Cayman Islands' population.

Madam Speaker, if I may reiterate myself, 80,000 vehicles are emitting air pollutants, carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases.

[Desk thumping]

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Car emissions are one of the key contributors of greenhouse gases. According to Terrapass, the transportation sector is accountable for 16.2 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in the world; greenhouse gases are responsible for climate change, as they trap heat that should otherwise escape from the atmosphere.

Madam Speaker, though yes, it is agreeable that greenhouse gases are key for the warm, love-temperature of the Cayman Islands, human activity has increased these gases' atmospheric concentration, causing a significant amount of heat to be trapped in our atmosphere.

Madam Speaker, our Islands' climate change risk assessment has highlighted a key point that I believe we're not thinking of when we buy a new car online to import on to the island. The report states that our Islands' main annual temperatures are projected to *increase* through the end of the century. Madam Speaker, are we all aware that by 2040 we expect the main temperature of our Islands to increase by 1.30 degrees Celsius?

That's not all, the risk assessment claims that cool days have a higher chance of decreasing by 2046 to 2065 for the summer months. Hot days and nights will increase remarkably instead, and *boiling* will be the only word that will be applicable—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Evidence.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** I have it right here.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Premier, please continue your speech.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** To describe the weather of our beloved Isles.

Madam Speaker, as the Premier of the Cayman Islands I am elected by the people, and therefore I listen to the people. This Government and the entirety of Grand Cayman have grown cognizant of something which I would like to state clearly in the House today. The term rush hour is a long forgotten phrase—Madam Speaker, for Grand Cayman, rush hour has become *rush hours*.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Morning gridlock starts before 6.00am and doesn't stop until after 9.00am, and we can only assume that it will extend with the personal vehicle culture that Grand Cayman has begun to adopt. There is absolutely no reason for the people of Grand Cayman to go through this, and I as the Premier have every intention to do my absolute best and resolve this problem.

Madam Speaker, I thoroughly believe that we in Grand Cayman have become too used to the pouring of concrete. To fix the epidemic that is the immense number of cars on our roads, we can no longer add more lanes; it is not sustainable and damages our island for the near future, more than helps it.

We as a Government, Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** No, I do not give way.

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Madam Speaker, our people need a better way to get to where they need to be, without having to save money to buy their own car. Yes, I admit that our public transportation system is used by a vast number of people on the island, however, our population is only growing, therefore the buses circulating our island need to be:

- Of sufficient size and capability to carry more people; and
- Reliable, so that people no longer wait for 30-plus minutes for the next shuttle to arrive.

Madam Speaker, this Government agrees that Private Member's Motion No. 2 should be considered of utmost importance. The current public transportation system of the Cayman Islands is in need of reconstruction and we look to do that; however, I would like to add one final thing before concluding my speech today, Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Premier, your time is up.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** May I have 30 more seconds?

**The Speaker:** You may.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** According to research conducted by University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), compared to driving alone, taking public transportation reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 45 per cent over all. Imagine the drastic change a new eco-friendly and efficient public transportation system could bring to the Cayman Islands.

Moving towards the future, the Island will no longer need to sacrifice our way of life to accommodate the growing temperature by the massive amounts of greenhouse gases; we can ease the increase of cars on the island; we can cut down the time of traffic congestion. We don't need to increase the construction of highways.

**The Speaker:** Your time is up.

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Minister of Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks, Minister of Tourism and Transport, Elected Member for George Town North:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, you have heard of a regular *nine-to-five*? Well, in Grand Cayman it's a *five-to-nine*.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Madam Speaker, every day many residents of this island are forced to leave their homes by the early hours of 5.00am and return by 9.00pm.

The negative impact that traffic congestion has on the residents of this island continues to worsen and has rapidly diminished the quality of life for our families and the next generation; consequently, this Government, answering the calls for solutions, is here today to support and assist the mover of this Motion by implementing a comprehensive transportation system.

As the Minister of Tourism and Transport, I must conduct and direct policies regarding the transportation unit. One would generally think that a single bus system would do the fix but, Madam Speaker, our crisis is unique in that we are a very small Island with

limited infrastructure, and any viable fix would take a combination of solutions.

Madam Speaker, we must change for the better; our better can come by the introduction of a properly designed, implemented and managed transportation system—a system that will require significant cooperation between myself, the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure (PAHI); the Ministry of Finance, and the Deputy Governor.

Following this, we the Government would like to explore these three essential solutions:

1. Establishing a new transportation system;
2. Development of road infrastructure and technology;
3. An integrated and Central Transportation Authority.

Madam Speaker, we must accept that these proposed solutions cannot be finalised overnight. Their success will depend on these strategic initiatives. In providing summary details to the solutions for the new transportation system, I will now attempt to address them individually.

### **Establishing a New Transportation System**

Madam Speaker, the implementation of this new system must be operated by the Government. This rat race for profit of a privately managed public system can no longer continue.

This Government proposes to implement public buses with designated bus routes to maintain the reliability across the island, especially those in the eastern districts. These proposed public buses will increase passenger capacity and assured scheduling by the development of technology and dedicated bus routes.

The flow of the system safeguarded by security and compliance measures will also be enforced by the proposed Transportation Authority. Consequently, drivers enrolled into this new system will require proper and effective training to operate these buses. We the Government believe, the current public bus drivers should be given the opportunity to be the first group of people enrolled in this new system to initiate a fair trial.

Moreover, I will be working closely with the Minister of PAHI to implement some regulations on vehicles for personal use. This Government seeks to implement a two-vehicle cap per household and the possibility of at least one day per week requirement to use the public bus. Madam Speaker, as a result, this will directly decrease the number of cars on the road.

I will also be working closely with the Minister of Finance on the regulation of vehicle importation. This proposed regulation will control the number of vehicles that are allowed to be imported per annum while taking into consideration the current number of active vehicles on the road and their age.

This Government also proposes to introduce a staggered work time to alleviate traffic congestion at peak times. With the introduction of staggered work

times, some employees have the capability to commence work at home in the morning and complete the remaining hours in the office if necessary. Madam Speaker, this would immediately alleviate the mad rush hour for everyone to get to work between the hours of 8.30 and 9.00am.

This Government also proposes to mandate the usage of pick up and drop off buses for private schools. This will directly decrease the traffic congestion at peak times, as well as support the staggered flexitime for parents who work.

### **Development of Road Infrastructure and Technology**

Madam Speaker, today our road infrastructure proves inadequate with the continuous development. Despite all our efforts, Grand Cayman still has a major traffic crisis and it begs the question, how will we find ourselves in 10 years as a nation with a growing population and limited infrastructure.

I will be closely working with the Minister of PAHI in collaboration with the Deputy Governor to implement solutions. Short-term solutions include indented bus lanes at bus stops to facilitate the free flow of traffic and the safe [on] and off boarding of passengers.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your time is up.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** May I please request an additional minute?

**The Speaker:** Seeing as you are the Minister for Tourism and Transport and this Motion falls in your remit, you may have a minute.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Madam Speaker, I will move to my third point which is the formation of a Central Transportation Authority.

### **Central Transportation Authority**

Madam Speaker, as we know, the Transportation Authority, is segregated. Why the Transportation Ministry is governed by legislation that another Ministry is responsible for?

For our plans to work effectively, we can no longer work with a decentralised Transportation Authority as it will hinder progress and create inefficiency for the planning and implementation of these solutions. Nonetheless, we the Government believe that through coordination with the Deputy Governor and the Crown of the United Kingdom, there should be a change in legislation that overrules the decentralisation of authority and places it under one Ministry.

In closing Madam Speaker, it is rather important that we understand where we are coming from, where we are going and where we need to be. Madam

Speaker, this complex topic needs much more analysis. Unfortunately, due to the time restriction—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your minute is up.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon, Members of this honourable House. I rise to speak on the Government's Motion: Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, an old saying goes, *the first step to recovery is to admit that you have a problem*. I would like to commend the Honourable Premier for acknowledging that there is a problem within our public transportation system, as the Government is on the road to accountability and recovery.

We as the Opposition today are here to represent the people. We have taken into consideration the Caymanians sitting in high traffic situations each morning and evening, five days a week minimum, on Grand Cayman, as well as the Caymanian public bus driver who works in our Government-regulated public transportation system.

We rise this morning not in total disagreement with the Motion presented by this honourable Youth Parliament Government, as we do believe they have good intentions. However, we wish to provide suggestions to improve our current public transportation system rather than implementing a completely new one.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** As the Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman, I cannot advocate for a system that completely ignores the people in my growing constituency.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** We must expect the unexpected and think long term. What will the Government do if Cayman Brac has a traffic problem within the next couple of decades?

In fact, Madam Speaker, I have been told by Members of this honourable Youth Parliament Government that there is no traffic on Cayman Brac. This ridiculous claim has led me to question whether this Government is capable of implementing what they propose,

if they do not even understand the meaning of the word that they put in their Motion.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Madam Speaker, traffic is defined as, and I quote the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, **"The vehicles that are on the road at a particular time"**. Madam Speaker, do I need to lay evidence on the Table to prove that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman do indeed—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. The Elected Member is misleading the House.

We are talking about traffic congestion. You're talking about traffic. Traffic would relate to the number of cars; traffic congestion is... you understand.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Point of Order, relevance. The Honourable Member is saying that this is about traffic congestion when the Motion specifically says it's about public transport.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman, please continue your speech.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Madam Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Transport states that I'm misleading the House, however, I have documentation signed by the Deputy Speaker stating that she heard and witnessed Members of this honourable Youth Parliament Government stating that there is no *traffic* on Cayman Brac, not traffic congestion. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, do I need to lay evidence on the Table to prove that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman have indeed at a point in time had vehicles on the road?

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Order again, Madam Speaker. Relevance.

As I stated in my speech, I am talking about Grand Cayman. The problem that we have is in Grand Cayman, and you mentioned traffic; as I previously

stated, I am talking about traffic congestion. There is a difference. Thank you.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Madam Speaker, may I please continue.

**The Speaker:** You may.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Furthermore, Madam Speaker, after conducting some research, Barbados has “**one of the most comprehensive and user friendly public transport networks in the Caribbean**”. Interestingly, “**the best way to get around Barbados is in a car**”. Let that sink in.

Despite their comprehensive public transportation system, the best way to get around Barbados is in a car. If this is not proof that it does not make sense to invest so much into a new public transportation system, Madam Speaker, I do not know what is.

*[Desk thumping]***The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order, Relevance. We are not Barbados.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please continue your speech.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Honourable Member I did not state that we are Barbados. I am simply saying that we need to be wise and look at other countries and see. If Barbados is doing it, and they still have a traffic problem, why would we do it?

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please continue.

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the population of our Islands is growing; it is no secret. Will the Government create an entirely new system decades from now, when there may be new transportation needs? What we need is to utilise our planning and finance sectors to come up with a plan and a budget to consistently improve our public transportation system to benefit Caymanians not only today, but in future as well.

Madam Speaker, I urge the Honourable Members of this Youth Parliament Government to be realistic in their approach to improving our public transportation system.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town East.

**Miss Mia Groves:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am honoured to second Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023. As the fastest growing [constituency] Bodden Town East and one of the most affected areas with traffic, my constituents wait over 12 hours weekly in traffic. Many persons are leaving before sunrise and returning to their homes after sunset. This is no quality of life, especially for families, when children are spending hours in traffic prior to going to school. Even those like myself who ride the school bus system are stuck in this ongoing traffic.

That's why we the Government deem it necessary to help our people by implementing a new public transportation system that is effective, reliable, sustainable, and hassle free. This improvement to the public transportation system would be like the George Town Revitalisation *hop and ride* transportation, that was launched and utilised by over 1000 persons daily, and that was just in the George Town area of operations.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I beg to ask this honourable House—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Does the Honourable Member have evidence to support that claim?

**Miss Mia Groves:** It's digital.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, respectfully, if the Honourable Member does not have physical evidence, I would like her to retract her statement.

**The Speaker:** Which statement in particular?

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** The one referring to 1000 people.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please retract your statement and continue your speech.

**Miss Mia Groves:** I retract my statement.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I beg to ask this honourable House: How many of you wish to give up 12 or more billable hours in a week without making a

dollar? The private sector and public sector must motivate and be cohesive with supporting this Government Motion to improve these infrastructures and implementation of such projects to better serve these Cayman Islands for the present and future generations.

Madam Speaker, I looked to my Minister of Finance and Economic Development [and] I asked, at this current rate of population growth and with this current problem, what would it look like in 10 or more years? Madam Speaker, this Government is not just about solving this problem but to resolve the matter so it will no longer occur over these Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, in this honourable House, no previous government has been able to resolve the issue, therefore, it is this Government's hope and will to work cohesively in proposing a way forward that will be cost effective, environmentally friendly, reliable, and supported by the people of these Islands. We encourage all Members of this honourable House to support this Motion and speak to, as well as encourage your constituents and private and public sector, to utilise this upgraded form of transportation.

Previous governments have implemented a duty increase on vehicles and reduced the duty for electric cars which are environmentally friendly. Some incentives we have to give to our people would be continuous buses every 15 minutes to and from work venues, grocery stores, hospitals, restaurants and local attractions. Businesses wishing to participate as a depot would receive duty waiver. Other incentives are free passes for teachers or professors and free [travel] for all retirees. Note to add: people would also be able to pay for the bus on their card or phone. These buses would also be able to hold up to 40 people and there would be new and improved bus routes. In addition, there will be an improvement of security by implementing cameras on the buses and other safety features, making them safer for the public. There would also be inspectors to randomly access buses to ensure that everything is going smoothly and people are paying. This system would help the ecosystem as the bus system would be eco-friendly, sustainable and electric. We would be implementing electric charging stations throughout the island that would be accessible to all buses making it easier to charge the vehicle.

Madam Speaker, with this system—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

#### Point of Elucidation

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Miss Mia Groves:** No.

**The Speaker:** You may continue.

**Miss Mia Groves:** Madam Speaker, with this system we would not only be helping the people of the Cayman Islands but improving the environment of our Islands.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I vote in favour of Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023, not just for myself but for the people of Bodden Town East, who I represent, and future generations of these Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay North.

*[Pause]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Public transport, a system in our Islands that is notorious for being inconvenient, inefficient and has the dire need to be fixed. I firmly believe that both the Opposition and the Government recognise the common issue among us being the much needed change that the system needs.

Having read this Motion in its entirety, I applaud the Government for their attempt to tackle this issue once again, and having the intent to bring about positive results unlike their predecessors; however, I can only acknowledge them as attempts, Madam Speaker. I want to draw light to problems that are often overlooked when it comes to our current transport system, as well as the potential dangers that this Motion holds.

One of the many issues I found in our transportation system is the lack of promotion within it. Now ridle me this Madam Speaker, would it be so hard for the Government to put information regarding our bus routes and payment rates in the over 120 designated bus stops island-wide? One hundred and twenty, Madam Speaker. Let that sink in; it is downright disappointing.

For the many years this system has been in effect, I would think that at least this basic yet crucial information would be the bare minimum for the Government and their transportation system. Sadly, I was wrong. Yes, there are posts across social media highlighting routes and cost rates for buses, but with that in mind, how many of our Caymanians and tourists know the cost of a trip from George Town to, say, Cayman Kai—

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** And the exchange rate between CI and US dollars. How many of our Caymanians and tourists know the routes that the buses on our roads take, much less the meaning of the initials on each bus.



Madam Speaker, these things have a purpose. These things aren't just on our buses for decoration!

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the honourable Minister for Education.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Madam Speaker, Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** I do not give way.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** [sighs] *Ahh.*

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** May I continue?

**The Speaker:** You may continue.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** This simple yet effective implementation would allow future passengers to plan their route and cost before even stepping foot on the bus, instead of potentially waiting by themselves with a useless chicken sandwich add— look at this, Madam Speaker. Such a change would provide more useful information than any Burger King chicken sandwich add ever will.

The next issue that our transportation system faces is the lack of management. Madam Speaker, the Opposition has interviewed quite a few people including bus drivers and members of the public and they all coincide the Government is the problem and I don't blame them.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** From bus stops promoting businesses instead of bus routes to the lack of regulation between buses, to miscommunication between the respective Ministries and the Transport Unit causing the recent strike last week.

Madam Speaker, these cries from the public are clear, yet the Government seems to have shut their ears from the very people who elected them into office.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** The very people who simply want to have their voices heard.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** I do not give way.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** It has become clear to me through this Motion Madam Speaker, that the Government does not want to fix public transportation for the sake of its problems, but to reduce issues pertaining to traffic.

This is brought out clearly by "Whereas" point 2, which reads, "**And whereas the current public transport system and its infrastructure are not adequate to cater to an island of over 70,000 people.**" While we can all agree that the increasing number of imported vehicles in our Islands does nothing but add to our traffic issue, it will take more than implementing a new system to fix this problem, Madam Speaker.

Yes, the current system does not cater to the needs of the majority of its users, I do agree; but to aim to cater to a population of over 70,000 people is simply absurd.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Public transportation shouldn't aim to include an entire population all at once nor should it have the capacity to do so, as it would almost never be cost efficient. Rather, it should aim to make long distance travel comfortable and as efficient as possible, for those that don't drive a vehicle.

["Whereas"] point number 5 also refers to traffic referring to the lack of deterrents to people owning multiple vehicles. Let me ask this, Madam Speaker. Say this Motion is passed, how many of our audience members would be willing to at least try out this new system? How many of our people will instinctively choose to use public transport over catching a ride with a class-mate, co-worker or fixing their own car?

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** I do not give way.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** You may continue.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** My point is that no matter how many changes are implemented into our transport system nothing, and I mean nothing, will ever beat having a personal vehicle.

Madam Speaker, until Cayman stops having accidents; until light poles no longer need maintenance; until we no longer have school or work to go to or come from; until roads are no longer blocked because of public events— and Madam Speaker, until our youth stop needing licenses, cars will continue to fill our roads and traffic will continue to exist!

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Madam Speaker, if traffic is at the heart of the Government's problems, I implore them to take a step back, reflect and *think outside the bus*.

*[Laughter and desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, your time is up.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Madam Speaker, can I have one minute?

**The Speaker:** You have half a minute.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Madam Speaker, this Motion should be in service to our citizens that actually use the transport system.

When I read the words, *implementation of a new public transport system in the Cayman Islands*, I am thinking about the person that has to catch the bus home, loaded down with groceries from Foster's; I'm thinking about the parent travelling with their children who is unable to drive a car for whatever reason. Madam Speaker, I am thinking about those who are up bright and early at Frank Sound Dock, in the thick of mosquitoes, just to catch a bus to work on time.

Madam Speaker, it disgusts me that Government can focus mainly on traffic in a public transport Motion, when we have citizens who live their daily lives like this.

*[Desk thumping]*

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**The Speaker:** The Elected Member's time is up. Please close off your speech.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Though I'm horribly let down by this Motion brought forward today Madam Speaker, I have hope that this may one day change into something that will positively benefit the people of our Islands and turn into a system that will cater for the people it was designed for.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Honourable Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

It is an honour today to rise in support of Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023. Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands is a prosperous nation that relies heavily on its financial sector along [with] other sectors like tourism, for economic growth and stability. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this reliance has been hindered in part not only by the extreme traffic congestion that I know for a fact everyone in this building today has experienced, but also the limited access to a reliable public transportation system.

When merely discussing the possible benefits of a public transportation system, it is essential to consider all the impacts such a system may provide from increased access to employment and a decrease in poverty, to finally reducing traffic congestion. This implementation of a comprehensive public transportation system in our country has the potential to lead to great improvements in both social welfare and economic growth.

Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands is a service-based economy and when our very own citizens are stuck in traffic for hours every morning, we the Government don't only see people stuck in traffic. We see a loss in productivity, quality of life and loss of family time and those are things we simply cannot put a price on; however, Madam Speaker, if we were to put a price on the loss of productivity, the numbers would be staggering.

Let's say we have 45,000 people stuck in four hours of traffic with an hourly rate of \$20. That equates to \$3.6 million a day, \$18 million a week, \$64 million a month and \$768 million a year lost, all from losing four hours of productivity. This loss of productivity occurs because there is no reliable transport system that can securely take our citizens to and from work.

Madam Speaker, I hail from Prospect; I love my constituency with all my heart, but have you ever been down Marina Drive? Do you know how long it takes from the bottom of Marina Drive to the top? Madam Speaker, it takes on average 30 minutes to walk from the bottom of Marina Drive to the top and another 30 just for a bus to come. That is already an hour of productivity lost.

This is why cars are constantly being bought, Madam Speaker— to reduce this constant time wasting. These people don't want to buy cars, but they are essentially being forced to, if they want any work to be done. Madam Speaker, with more concise bus routes running effectively at specific times, we can fix this problem with ease.

Madam Speaker, the constant hours that traffic consumes eventually takes a toll on the expenses that our citizens have to pay. The amount of gas that is lost on being idle in traffic is astonishing. On average, an hour of traffic results in one half-gallon of gas being lost and if half a gallon is being lost per hour, I can only imagine how many gallons the Elected Member for East End loses per day.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Madam Speaker, if we relate back to our number of 45,000 people being on the road, it results in 315 gallons of gas being lost and with these gas prices... *Oh Jesus*, Madam Speaker, \$888,000 being lost *per hour*.

Now Madam Speaker, you are familiar with traffic jams.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Evidence.

He has stated many facts and statistics—about 800 million this, 800 million that— but I would like to see the evidence of these actual points.

Thank you.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** If the Elected Member would like me to get a whiteboard, I am willing to do the math for her right now, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, honestly, if the Member cannot show me physical evidence of these calculations, I'm sorry, but I cannot call them feasible. For all I know he could be pulling them out of the air, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** If I refer back to my speech, Madam Speaker, if the Elected Member chose to listen to me. I stated, and I quote, “**we have 45,000 people stuck in four hours of traffic with an hourly rate of \$20**”. Did you take math class, Elected Member?

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** I will ask the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to please be seated and I will ask the Honourable Deputy Premier to continue his speech.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Thank you.

Madam Speaker, you are familiar with traffic jams and I know you are familiar with accidents. An article in the *Cayman Compass* stated that 8,000 used vehicles were imported into the island [UNVERIFIED]. This is far too many vehicles on the road at the same time.

Madam Speaker, my Government doesn't seek to fully restrict the importation of new vehicles—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Evidence.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Come here BTC [Bodden Town Central]. I got you.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** The Honourable Deputy Premier, please continue your speech, time is against us.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Thank you.

We don't seek to fully restrict the importation of new vehicles, however, we plan to ultimately restrict the importation of certain vehicles over a certain age limit in order to finally cut down not only on the pollution that is left behind, but the number of vehicles on the road at the same time.

Madam Speaker, this restriction would be increasing in severity nearly every two years as the public will become desensitized to this restriction. For example, if and when this Motion gets passed, the maximum age limit for a car would be 10 years, then in two years—

**The Speaker:** Due to time, Elected Member, I'd ask that you please be seated and allow the Deputy Premier to finish his speech.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Thank you. As time is against us, I will get to the end.

Madam Speaker, all of these ideas are proposals that are achievable, but in reality we as legislators must ask ourselves the question, how are we going to pay for it?

We as a Government have enough funds and will continue to have enough funds for this endeavour. In the beginning of 2021, we had a deficit of \$59 million and over the past two years, we have successfully risen from our ruins to create a \$106 million turnaround, leaving us with approximately \$47 million in surplus, which is more than enough to fund this project.

Madam Speaker, as I close today, I hope everything that I have told you has resonated—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Deputy Premier, your time is up.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Can I get 10 seconds?

**The Speaker:** You can have 20 seconds.

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Okay.

I hope everything I told you today resonates with you. We must remember that we stand here to make progress that will actually benefit our Cayman Islands and our people.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Red Bay.

**Mr. Christian Campbell, Elected Member for Red Bay:** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, whoever said nothing is impossible is clearly a liar. I have seen this Government do nothing for years.

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** As my colleagues before, I rise to speak on the Government's Motion. I will address the first "whereas" which states, "**Whereas personal vehicle dependency and traffic problems in Grand Cayman are seriously affecting the lifestyle of citizens and the environment of the island.**" I oppose this statement because a new transportation system is not guaranteed to reduce—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for George Town Central.

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** I do not give way; I am just starting my speech.

I oppose this statement because a new transportation system is not guaranteed to reduce personal vehicle dependency or traffic congestion. In fact, carpooling and limits on motor vehicle purchases may be better solutions to reduce the traffic in the long term, while a public transportation system may not be as convenient for some persons.

Firstly, Madam Speaker, personal vehicle dependency will not automatically be minimised by the implementation of a new system. There is no guarantee

that people would even use a new system. Even if people are incentivised to use the public transport system, people would still not necessarily do so due to safety concerns, hygiene and personal comfort.

Madam Speaker, why would people who drive their own cars give up such a luxury solely because of a new transportation system?

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Furthermore, Madam Speaker, there are alternatives to a new transportation system; that could include carpooling. Carpooling has been proven to limit the amount of congestion while also limiting the amount of greenhouse emissions.

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Researchers from UC Berkeley [sic] found that employees that carpool on their way to and from work can decrease their carbon emissions 22 to 28 per cent. Let that sink in, Madam Speaker.

If carpooling Acts are put in place, it would be one way to improve the lifestyle and health of our citizens because there would naturally be fewer cars on the road which means less traffic and less frustration for our people.

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Also, Madam Speaker, laws on the number of cars per household will help with congestion and emissions.

In 2022 alone, 8000 cars were licenced to drive in the Cayman Islands; 8000 cars. That means 8000 cars to add to the traffic, 8000 cars to add to congestion. Madam Speaker, if laws were put in place there will not be as many cars on the road.

Madam Speaker, Bermuda, a country with similar population size as Cayman, has a law that limits the number of cars per household. With this law, the country has been able to limit congestion and reduce carbon emissions. There are other solutions to the problem addressed by this Government, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I hope that it is known—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Misleading the House.

We have stated that we are going to enact some of these things. The Honourable Minister of Transport stated a restriction on the number of cars that each household will own, which is exactly the argument that you are making so I applaud you for making it. Thank you.

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Chad.

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Sorry, sorry. The Honourable Minister of Education. What I am—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Health & Wellness.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Keira Borden, Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Savannah:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

The Elected Member shall not call the Elected Member for North Side by his name. He should call him by Minister of Education or his constituency. Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Please continue your speech and refrain from calling Members by their personal names. Thank you.

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** In response to the Minister of Education, I am merely giving other solutions to the problems that you have stated in your Motion. I am not here necessarily to oppose everything you are saying. I am just giving solutions to aid you in creating a proper solution for the Caymanian people.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. [Standing Order] 35(2) states, “**It is out of order to attempt to revive in any debate a matter or reconsider any specific question upon which the House has come to a conclusion...**”

We already stated that we are imposing restrictions on importation and you're bringing it up again. Would you not say that you're opening this conclusion again?

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** I am not opening up an area for debate again; I am simply stating a solution that can aid this Government.

Madam Speaker, I also hope it is known that the country's traffic issues are not as a result of a failing

transport system. To say that a new transportation system is the solution to the traffic issues is simply ludicrous. Regardless of a new system being put in place, thousands of people would be pouring into Town anyway. A new transportation system would not stop that. I do commend this Government for trying to come up with a solution, but this is simply not it— the statement that this new system will address the traffic issue is not true.

Finally, Madam Speaker, bus schedules and restricted routes may not promote a flexible or convenient lifestyle for some residents. For many people, the bus system is just too rigid for them to use it because buses only travel at allotted times and only to selected routes. People may find this constricting as with a personal vehicle, they have more flexibility. This in itself is a big deterrent for the public transport system, as many may feel like they do not get the same convenience [owning] a car may have. Even with a new public transport system, this problem will not be fixed because a strict schedule will always be needed.

To conclude, as I stated, a new public transport system alone will not solve the traffic issues and personal vehicle dependency. There are other solutions to these issues such as carpooling and limits on how many cars a household can own.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak, Madam Speaker.

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, & Infrastructure.

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, Elected Member for West Bay South:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, today I rise to support Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023: Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands. The traffic getting here this morning was so dreadful that I have been sitting down all day, so not only am I rising to support this Motion, but also to stretch out my legs.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** Madam Speaker, I would like to be able to take the public transportation system but currently it is too uncomfortable and too unreliable. With high gas prices and cost of living, cars on the road are starting to get more care than actual people.

Madam Speaker, as the Minister for Planning Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, I am fully aware of the lack of current infrastructure in the Cayman Islands when we talk about developing new, safe, efficient and reliable roads. Furthermore, the Ministry is fully aware of how it poses a challenge to developing our public transportation system; however, we cannot

just build our way out of road congestion as there is so little space to build on our small islands.

The Government acknowledges that the space for new infrastructure is currently inadequate, but the future development of our roads and infrastructure will mandate the planning for infrastructure that can accommodate bus lanes, bicycle lanes, and more sidewalks and roads in the future.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** However, Madam Speaker, before we can talk more about bus lanes and more roads in Cayman, I have a question for this honourable House. Why is it called rush hour when nothing moves?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** If there's anything rushing, it is our fast growing population, as according to the 2021 census Cayman has reached a population of about 71,432 people. Madam Speaker, I don't need a calculator to figure out that with this growing number, more people will be bringing cars into the Cayman Islands.

In addition, the Cayman Islands Constitution says that [the people] affirm to be “a country—”

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for George Town South.

#### Point of Order

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Point of Order. The Member stated that there are 71,000 people in Cayman, but their Motions says 75,000. Does she have evidence to support the claim?

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** Yes, Madam Speaker, I do have evidence to support that there're 71,432 people in Cayman. Would you like me to provide that evidence?

**The Speaker:** You may continue your speech.

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In addition, the Cayman Islands' Constitution says [the people] affirm to be “**a country that makes optimal use of modern technology**”. With that, technology will become an incredibly efficient resource. The current transportation system needs a revamping of its services so that it can better cater to the needs of the community.

Madam Speaker, there is concern with comfort and safety when it comes to taking a public bus. The Government intends to improve the conditions for passengers. This will be done by implementing more security cameras in public buses and ensuring there are amenities such as air conditioning, free Wi-Fi and charging ports in every single public bus. Passengers on these public buses deserve to have peace of mind

and a sense of relaxation while they try and make their journey, and as the Government maintains our Constitution.

Madam Speaker, this Government prides itself on *putting our money where our mouth is*. That's why there are several ongoing projects with the National Roads Authority (NRA), such as the Linford Pierson Highway and the extension of the East-West Arterial road. These are just a few examples, however, even though the first thought to fix traffic congestion is to create more roads in Cayman, it is only a temporary solution.

A more long-term solution is improving our current public transportation system. Madam Speaker, we don't have one, not two, but one hundred and twenty five designated bus stops and shelters island-wide, not to mention—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** No, I do not.

Not to mention, with this Motion we are considering increasing those numbers. I would also like to mention that the Elected Member for West Bay North provided incorrect information because we do not have one hundred and twenty bus stops, it is one hundred and twenty five.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay North.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. The honourable Member is misleading the House. I said, and I quote, “**over one hundred and twenty**”, not one hundred and twenty exactly.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** As such, I would like to ask her to withdraw her statement.

Thanks.

**The Speaker:** Please continue your speech— you have an extra 15 seconds.

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With the implementation of this Motion, we plan to focus on the security and efficiency of these bus stops by having security cameras in buses; having a service and emergency call station at bus stops, and placing more charging ports and bus-related information at bus stops.

Madam Speaker, as I draw my speech to a conclusion, it is only a fact—

**The Speaker:** Elected Member your time is up. I will give you 20 seconds to conclude your speech.

**Hon. Ashley Ebanks:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This very Motion was created not only to implement a new public transportation system, but also to help reduce traffic congestion.

I urge all parliamentarians listening to support this Motion. I strongly believe that the better our road infrastructure, the better our public transportation system will be.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would [like to] thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak in this House today. I rise today to address the financial and social issues that I have found rather easily within this honourable Government's Motion on implementing a new public transportation system in the Cayman Islands. I will be speaking on why it's a complete waste of money and time to build a new system instead of amending what we currently have.

In my opinion, this honourable Government has lacked consideration in proposing this Motion before this Parliament, acknowledging their failed attempt in creating new sustainable systems, and I will be addressing my first point.

Madam Speaker, referring to the second "whereas" statement in the Government's Motion, how is this Government going to be able to afford to build this new system? Has this Government considered where that money will be coming from? In their Motion, our own Government has acknowledged that our infrastructure is insufficient to support this initiative.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Point of Elucidation and also Point of Order, it's multiple.

**The Speaker:** Do you give away?

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Absolutely not.

**The Speaker:** Please continue your speech.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** If I may raise my Point of Order.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Might I remind this noble Government of their previous failed attempt to rectify this public transportation issue?

In an article by the *Cayman Compass* on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2022, the Honourable Minister of Transport, Kenneth Bryan travelled to Barbados as a means to resolve this public transportation issue with his [Barbados] counterpart, Santia Bradshaw. He said, and I quote, "that partnership is information-sharing which will cost us nothing"; but Madam Speaker, it did in fact cost something. In order to get to that consultation, travel, food, accommodation— and transport— had to be accounted for some way or another.

In another article published by the *Cayman Compass* later that same year, on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022, we can see that this government paid Deloitte \$200,000 to create a public transport plan. Madam Speaker, to me that doesn't sound free of cost at all.

This Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. The Elected Member is misleading. You can't say this Government when this Government did not do that. Can she please retract her statement?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please continue your speech.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Madam Speaker, acknowledging the need for consultants, the Cayman Islands Government has a track record of hiring them and not adhering fully to their recommendations, as nothing that I have seen planned has been executed on time, within budget, or done at all.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker, it is therefore repeatedly wasting money from the government's purse, one example being their failed attempts at creating a successful public transportation system.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, implementing a brand new system of transport is, might I say, irresponsible. I am beginning to wonder what was going on in the minds of the Youth Parliament Government when creating this Motion, and there are numerous reasons as to why creating a new system will fail.

Looking at the economical state of the world, creating such a system could increase the cost of living in the Cayman Islands, and Madam Speaker, are the citizens—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister of Education.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Misleading the House.

The Member— I will not say elected Member for East End, because they do not live anywhere near there— has continuously alluded to what our Government has done. It is not what our Government has done.

On top of that, is referring to things that have been outside of our power; and to answer the question, what was going through our minds is that our pride is far less important than the people out there, and we must swallow it to protect them and do what is best for them.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, you may continue.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Keep in mind that I'm the Member elected to represent East End, I am not from East End.

Madam Speaker, are the citizens of the Cayman Islands going to have to compensate this Government for a more comprehensive plan and comprehensive system?

Madam Speaker, might I repeat, are we able to afford this? I have found that this Youth Parliament Government is being unrealistic in wanting to cater for a population of over 75,000 people, when we don't have that many people on island currently.

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

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Alexander Harris, Deputy Premier:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Misleading the House.

I previously stated exactly how we have the funds to pay for this Motion, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please continue.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

How will it benefit the Cayman Islands? My fellow Members of Opposition and I went out and talked to the people who would be most affected by this new system— the bus drivers; the majority said that the cars on the road are not the problem.

How much would Wi-Fi and an extra security system cost again? The people who drive the cars on the road do not wish to waste money. There is a reason for no public buy-in.

Madam Speaker, some people might not want to use public transport, not just for their own health but peace of mind. Madam Speaker, believe it or not, some people don't want their small child going on the bus by themselves or being around strangers.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Some adults may not feel comfortable around other people in small vicinities. People will always have a preference.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, in terms of financing, addressing the Government's fifth "whereas" statement in their Motion, this Government is behaving ignorant to the fact that it has benefited from the exorbitant importation fees on private vehicles, when most homes in the Cayman Islands have one or more vehicles.

It negates the need for a government-run transportation system, when we hardly have enough space to run these private vehicles. It is unfair that we tell the citizens of our Islands to get rid of these vehicles that they paid extra money for on duties; to get rid of them on their own, without incentives and compensation.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I agree with the fact that Cayman needs to amend what we currently have rather than spending an exorbitant amount of money on a new system— especially since there isn't even public buy-in— if, Madam Speaker, this Youth Parliament Government is willing to take a more reasonable approach to the issue so that our Cayman Islands citizens can look forward to an improved system without having to worry about the Government unnecessarily—

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, your time is up.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Can I get 15 more seconds?

**The Speaker:** You can get 15 seconds.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Thank you.

Without having to worry about the Government unnecessarily adding to the national debt.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.



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

I recognise the Honourable Deputy Governor.

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Pause]

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Madam Speaker, I first want to thank the Members of this honourable House for the exemplary input into this debate so far.

The Elected Member for George Town Central gave an effective description of the Private Member's Motion No. 2, so I won't speak much on that. As the Deputy Governor however, and the Leader of the Civil Service, I will be speaking on the Civil Service's preparedness to enforce this Motion should it be carried.

Madam Speaker, I am in direct contact with the Commissioner as we make plans to inform the local police, specifically those in the traffic division, of potential laws. The Police and Fire Departments are also preparing for the increase in accidents that may or may not occur considering the increase in speeds caused by less traffic.

Madam Speaker, the Civil Service has also diligently prepared all the documents that would be needed as requested and required by different Ministries. The Department of Vehicles and Drivers' Licensing, along with the National Roads Authority under the Civil Service, are prepped and ready to be instructed on the new arrangements to enforce potential policies.

Madam Speaker—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker, a Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** How do we know that these departments are going to be ready for the vehicles on the roads with, as you have said, increasingly high speeds?

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Madam Speaker, I am the Leader of the Civil Service and if I say they are ready, they are ready.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

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

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker, Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give away?

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Yes, Madam Speaker.

[Laughter]

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Is the Deputy Governor being knowledgeable at this moment? With departments full of staff members, how is he so sure that each member of the department is going to do their job accurately, correctly, and for the safety of the people of the Cayman Islands?

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Madam Speaker, I know that because I do my job well.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, I ask that you please take your seat and allow the Deputy Governor to finish his speech.

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Should the Motion be passed, Madam Speaker, the new bus drivers and other government-employed facilitators of the bus system would be a part of the civil service and would be cordially welcomed. Measures are being put into place to make this possible; uniforms and so forth are being designed for all drivers and facilitators.

Madam Speaker, a decrease in traffic would decrease the response time of our ambulances, firemen, policemen. Should traffic be decreased, the Civil Service definitely looks forward to benefiting from this, and so will our people. Not only would civil servants be able to get to work faster, but they would be under less stress when they get there, as will be highlighted by the Minister of Health and Wellness.

Madam Speaker, just the other day while exiting this very building, I saw the Governor of the Cayman Islands stuck in traffic.

[Desk thumping]

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Madam Speaker, an OBE, an Officer of the Most Excellent [Order of the] British Empire, stuck in traffic.

Madam Speaker, as it stands, traffic is a bold and irrefutable ill to the Caymanian society.

[Desk thumping]

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** The Civil Service has been and will continue to combat this

ill in accordance with the Crown, the Ministries, our country's Laws and policies.

Madam Speaker, in terms of traffic congestion, congestion is mainly due to the intensive use of automobiles, whose ownership has spread massively in Grand Cayman in recent times. Private-owned cars have benefits in terms of facilitating personal mobility and giving a sensation of security and even of heightened status, especially in a developing country like ours.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, “**since on average at rush hours each occupant of a private car causes about 11 times as much congestion as passengers on a bus**”, buses may be the key to defeating this ill. This estimate was issued by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. If this is true, Madam Speaker, why aren't Caymanians using the existing public transportation system?

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

**Miss Abbey Walton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Could I please ask for the physical evidence of the statistics that you just mentioned? Thank you.

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** Yes Madam Speaker, the evidence is right here.

[Pause]

[Laughter]

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** I like to make it easier.

**The Speaker:** You may continue your speech.

**The Deputy Governor, Hon. Jordan McDonald:** For this next claim Madam Speaker, there is also evidence.

If so, why aren't Caymanians using the existing public transportation system? *Cayman Compass* blames this on its unreliability, arguing that nearly 400 complaints were filed in just one month. The traffic situation is further aggravated in the region by problems of road design and maintenance in the city, which will be corrected soon; a style of driving which shows little respect for other road users; faulty information on traffic conditions, and ill distribution of the population.

Madam Speaker, enforcing laws and policies which do not exist is not and will never be an option for the civil service. We await the approval of Private Member's Motion No. 2 to take further action.

While identifying the cause of traffic congestion is important, the most important thing is finding a solution. Whatever that solution may be Madam Speaker,

the Civil Service of the Cayman Islands is ready to adopt and work.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

**The Speaker:** Does any other Member wish to speak? I recognise the Honourable Attorney General (AG).

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, did you know that it can take less time to travel from here to Jamaica than it takes to travel from East End to George Town?

[Desk thumping]

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Today Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for Cayman Brac—

#### Point of Order

**Miss Raeann Matute-Scott:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker, evidence.

**The Speaker:** I haven't finished recognising you. Please be seated.

Honourable Attorney General, please continue your speech.

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Today Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023: Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, the public transportation system in place now is what some would call unreliable; whether it's not being able to catch a bus until an hour or more after reaching a bus stop or not actually being dropped off to where you're supposed to be.

As Attorney General, Madam Speaker, I cannot tell you how many times I have almost been late to court due to being stuck in bumper to bumper traffic; without a proper transportation system, they can pass my cases on to someone else, because this traffic is very unlawful.

[Desk thumping]

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Madam Speaker, the objective of this Motion is to implement a new public transport system and reduce the traffic congestion.

According to the Cayman Islands Customs & Border Control, the highest duty rate on vehicles valued

at more than \$30,000 is only 42 per cent. Since there is no true deterrent to the importation of cars, should we use this as a form of deterrent even though the amount paid in duty is less than the amount of the actual value of the car, or can we change and create other forms of deterrents.

For starters, we can increase customs duties currently charged on cars, limit the age of vehicles imported, and limit the cars each person can buy unless a person is an owner of a car company or a car collector, and so on.

Madam Speaker, there is no law that states how many cars one household should have, let alone [how many] one person is allowed to own, therefore, imagine the fact that we have more cars than people in this island, which is why limiting the number of cars per household or that a person can have—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Absolutely not.

This is why limiting the number of cars a household or a person can have will help control the numbers of cars operating on—

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

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Attorney General, do you have evidence for the claim that there are more cars than people in the Cayman Islands.

[Pause]

**The Speaker:** Honourable Attorney General, please continue.

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Madam Speaker, while reviewing the relevant laws, namely the Traffic Act (2021 Revision) and the Traffic (Public Passenger Vehicles) Regulations (2020 Revision) to prepare for this contribution, these Laws and Regulations are inadequate.

To begin with, the Traffic (Public Passenger Vehicles) Regulations (2020 Revision) contains many sections dealing with how people can obtain permits to drive public transport vehicles; the conduct of drivers;

identification information; standard in the equipment of vehicles; tax meters; offenses, with only two sections dedicated to the matter of passengers and of those two, only one dealing with the transportation of passengers.

By way of an example, the Traffic (Public Passenger Vehicles) Regulations (2020 Revision) section 10(4)(a-c) states as follows: **“Between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on any day no driver of a bus or taxi shall pick up passengers, or wait for any period for that purpose, anywhere in the district of George Town on the following roads—**

- (a) North Church Street from the northern part of its junction with Fort Street to where it meets Harbour Drive;**
- (b) Harbour Drive; and**
- (c) South Church Street from where it meets Harbour Drive to the southern part of its junction with Boilers Road.”**

Madam Speaker, looking at the regulations, it is understandable why these regulations are put in place, because of the large amount of traffic on these roads. Also, from what the objective of this Motion is, it may allow people along these roads to eventually have easy access to public transportation. Furthermore, to speak on the Traffic Act (2021 Revision) Part 4 - Public Passenger Vehicles, section 52(1) (d) states: **“the location and marking of bus stops, and the conditions under which they shall be used”**.

This is something, Madam Speaker, that the Cabinet has control over because the Act states that the Cabinet may make regulations to deal with this issue, but while the Government has decided the locations of bus stops, bus drivers do not always stop at these bus stops. When a new public transportation system is put in place, this is something that should change.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, the main objective of this Motion is to implement a new public transport system and reduce traffic congestion. Furthermore, as I pointed out earlier, the Laws in place now are quite inadequate; most of them are not being obeyed to this day, therefore, they should be revamped and made stronger.

The laws for the new public transportation system should state that for any person caught using the bus lane that is not driving a registered public bus or without a proper permit will be fined.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Attorney General, your time is up.

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** May I beg for 30 more seconds.

**The Speaker:** Yes, you can have 30 seconds.

**The Attorney General, Hon. Alicia Faulknor:** Madam Speaker, the current penalties for traffic offenses should also be increased as a deterrent, therefore, the

fine should be increased significantly and the period of imprisonment should also be increased.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that should these changes be put in place we would have a more reliable public transportation system thereby decreasing the need for persons to own private vehicles. I therefore urge all Honourable Members of this Parliament to support this Motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for Bodden Town Central.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to express my opinion on the Motion before this honourable Youth Parliament this afternoon, and I simply cannot support it for the following reasons.

Madam Speaker, in the 2021 Census Report by the ESO it is stated that the Cayman Islands has a population of 71,432 of which 71,105 are non-institutional. In the 2010 report, the population was 55,036 showing a 29.2 per cent increase. The Government has acknowledged that, and I quote, “**the current public transport system and its infrastructure are not adequate to cater to an island of over 75,000 people**”— now, Madam Speaker, do 75,000 people take the public bus daily?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Why are we trying to create a public bus system that caters for over the population that we have?

The Opposition agrees with the statement however, do we agree with creating an entirely new public transport system? Absolutely not. We need to make the necessary amendments to make the system more reliable and to ensure that it can adequately serve an island with an ever-growing population.

Madam Speaker, the Government stated in their Motion that there are traffic problems in Grand Cayman that are seriously affecting the lifestyle of citizens and the environment. Implementing an entirely new public transport system will most definitely not solve that problem.

The citizens in the eastern districts are the ones who suffer most from the problem. Let us look at some statistics that will help us to understand the severity of the issue.

Madam Speaker, in Table 9.1 of the 2021 Census Report that shows the working age population in each district, it shows that there are a total of 14,634 working citizens that live in the eastern districts. Now in the recent East-West Arterial Extension public meeting

held by the NRA on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023, a graph was shown comparing where people live and where people work. From the display, it was quite evident that residents live on many different parts of the Island, however, as to where people work, George Town is saturated. Do we see where the root of this problem is?

Madam Speaker, how about we start moving some of our Government jobs into the eastern districts to lessen the number of people coming into town on a daily basis.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Misleading the House. We have said it is something that this Government is looking at, so we agree it is a viable solution.

Thank you.

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, how are we so sure that making a shift to a new, unusual and *maybe* better system that citizens aren't used to will not cause a plethora of new problems instead of solving them. There are many alternatives and I will go ahead and suggest some.

Madam Speaker, let us take a look at Bermuda. They have used many alternatives to tackle their traffic problem; maybe we can use them as an example seeing that they are similar in size, a fellow British Overseas Territory, and have little to no room for mass development. One way they have lowered traffic is by implementing a ferry.

Madam Speaker, do our people know about Cayman Ferries? The *Cayman Compass* published an article titled, “Cayman Ferries suspends Newlands water taxi service”. I bet most of us here did not know there was a ferry service from Camana Bay to Newlands and vice versa.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Yes.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Your proposed implementation is a ferry system. What would happen if there was rough weather, as we are a Caribbean country in tropical conditions?

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Yes, it is understandable, weather is unpredictable; we could also use the public bus or they could use their cars, but just providing an alternative is better than not having an alternative.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** As we are prone to have natural disasters, why waste money on a ferry system?

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** It's not wasting money. We don't have natural disasters every day. After all, we come from a seafaring heritage.

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** If a water-based service does not come up in our alternatives, then what are we doing?

Madam Speaker, another alternative is adding electronic scooters and bikes to the system. This has proven to be another effective method in Bermuda. Bird is a private-owned company in Miami that was created by an ex worker at Uber and Lyft. Uber and Lyft are two of the United States' largest transportation companies. We should partner with them and make this private sector company more publicised and affordable. It would be a great alternative because it is a safe and fun way to travel across the island quickly and efficiently; and for all the environmental nerds, the scooters are electric so we don't need to worry about affecting the environment.

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, before I close, I would like to quote what the Honourable Minister for PAHI said in her speech about *improving the system*; however, it contradicts your Motion [which] says, *implementing an entirely new system*.

Also, the Honourable Premier stated that we should not be adding any more roads, for it would be adding to the problem but the Honourable AG spoke about introducing bus lanes. Are we going to be importing more buses to add to the traffic congestion on the road?

[Desk thumping]

**Mr. Raldayne Thomas:** Madam Speaker, I hope the Government is not depending on this new transport system to fix traffic, because we all know that's like waiting on Santa to come; however, let us make conscious decisions that will positively affect our citizens.

As a representative of my constituents in Bodden Town Central, I believe that instead of implementing an entirely new system, we should make the necessary amendments to make our system more reliable to the public.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjection]

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

[Pause]

I recognise the Honourable Minister of Youth Sports, Culture & Heritage.

**Hon. Jelani Hanson, Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage, Elected Member for George Town West:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to support Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023. Madam Speaker, if we don't do something about this congestion, the best way to get around this island will be by teleporting.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** You don't even need statistics to back up a statement like this. At this point, being at a standstill at 5 o'clock is a part of Caymanian culture and heritage, and I would know because that's my Ministry.

On that note, let's talk about the real culture and heritage of the island. Back in the day, we used to block off a road or two to facilitate culture and heritage events. You know, people would wake up, drive to Batabano, enjoy themselves dancing *them thing there* and get home in good time. Now you block off one road and traffic congestion is so bad, that people are trapped in there for hours on end.

The Agriculture Show had Spotts to Savannah completely jammed. Pirates' Week 2022, Madam Speaker, people were getting out of their cars and walking home. The Haunted House, one of my constituents was stuck in traffic for two hours making an 11-minute's trip. These are all big events in Cayman. Should they cause traffic jams when they are held because one road is closed? What does that say about our car dependency? I know what it says. It says that our dependency on personal vehicles in the Cayman Islands is terrible; so terrible that one road closed throws everything off, and looking at the data it is only going to worsen.

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

**Mr. Christian Campbell:** Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** I do not.

Looking at the data, it's only going to worsen with 8000 new cars joining the jams last year— and that was just last year; but you know what Madam Speaker, at least we are comforted by the fact that these traffic jams only happen once every now and then when a big event happens, right? Yeah, no.

Spare a thought for the young people. This traffic epidemic as the Premier puts it, affects our students five days out of the week at least and if you go to any school on Walkers Road, you know exactly what I am talking about.

This Youth Parliament Government conducted a survey to find out how students are affected by traffic congestion by asking them at what time their schools started and ended, at what time they left the house, and how long it took them to get to and from school. When I looked at the results— I will be honest— I noticed that more people took 11 to 20 minutes to get to school than 45 minutes plus, and I said to myself, “*but wait, that’s not what I was expecting*”; but further inspection shows that students are leaving home *hours* before school begins.

Madam Speaker, if most schools start from 7.40 [am] to 8 o’clock, why it is that students are leaving their house at 6.30, 6.00, 5.30a.m.? Then, on their way home, 25 per cent of students said that rides took 30 minutes or more. Journeys that should take people 45, 30, 10 minutes have students—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker; evidence. Does the Member have evidence to support the claim that students wake up 5.45, 6.30, et cetera.

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** I have the results of my survey, Madam Speaker.

May I continue? Thank you.

Journeys that should take people 45, 30, 10 minutes have students leaving before the sun comes up all across the island. To me, it seems like people don’t need vitamin D any more.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** Some might say it’s just people waking up early to get to school early, but I believe it is clear that these people only wake up that early to avoid possible congestion. If the flow of traffic is so terrible that people leave the house *hours* in advance when the trip should take less than an hour, what does that say about our country? What does that say about the severity of traffic congestion in the Cayman Islands?

Let’s follow this trend together. If students are leaving their house before dawn, it means they’re waking up even earlier than that and if they’re getting home late, then they have to stay up later into the night to do assignments, especially those students whose schools

don’t offer free periods. One student even wrote, “*I am so tired of waking up at four in the morning and getting home at seven in the night.*”

The fact of the matter is, they are going to sleep late and waking up early and this has repercussions outside of academics. Madam Speaker, think of free time, time for hobbies and self-fulfilling activities; think of time for family, think of movie nights, think of going to Camana Bay’s [CB] parking garage with friends. Think of time for extracurricular [activities]; time *gone* because we are allowing congestion to fester and worsen. Madam Speaker, it cannot work. There is a need for Private Member’s Motion No. 2 of 2023. It is a need that you can see in Cayman every single day. It is a need that you cannot deny!

While currently we do provide bus service for public schools, there are people who might not utilise it, for whatever reason. Madam Speaker, we are proposing a bus system that parents can take with their kids if they so wish; a bus system that covers the private school students who don’t have a system like this—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Point of Elucidation.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** I do not. May I continue?

A bus system equipped with buses that people and the students want to use. You imagine what Walkers Road would look like in the morning with this bus system to take students to school?

Think of cultural events, comfortable, clean and safe transport to and from big cultural events that free up the standstills we are all too familiar with. We want to say goodbye to the standstill so bad, that parking your car would make no difference. We want to see people leave their house at 5.30 for Pirates’ Week and get there before 9.00 pm.

Madam Speaker, for us in the Cayman Islands—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your time is up.

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** May I please have a minute to finish my speech?

**The Speaker:** You have 15 seconds.

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** Okay, I guess I’ll just skip to the end.

Like I’ve said; like my colleagues have been saying, and like the people of this beautiful island will tell you, there is a need for change. There is a need for

a solution, and I think that there is a need for this Motion.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

*[Pause]*

I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay Central.

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** Madam Speaker, good afternoon. I rise to speak on Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023.

Madam Speaker, I have a question for you. Is it not the most important job of parliamentarians to improve our residents' quality of life? The answer to this question is probably the only thing the Government and Opposition can agree on; however, the Government seems to have forgotten their role. This movement, because I can't call it a Motion, is doing the exact opposite of helping the people.

Madam Speaker, I am unaware of what the Government's intentions were when drafting this Motion but to put it bluntly, Madam Speaker, this Motion is a joke and our people should not be impacted by this Motion. I mean, *yeah, motion*.

Madam Speaker, the concept of this transportation Motion is complex and it often takes much experimentation to be able to make it work. In some cases, it might feel like things don't make sense. There are too many variables at play and without proper revision, it will be difficult to make the Motion successful.

Madam Speaker, I am not here to completely throw out this Motion as I can see how it can be beneficial, however, only with the right approach and the right set of skills can it become a reality. To ensure success in this endeavour, the Government should invest in experienced professionals who have a deep understanding of how the Motion works and possess real life experience, translating that Motion into solutions that work for everyone involved; not just individuals who complain about traffic.

Madam Speaker, not only is the Motion going to be significantly expensive and take money from our residents which the government—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** No, I don't.

Madam Speaker, not only is this Motion going to be significantly expensive and take away money from our citizens which the Government fails to realise

we do not have, but this new transportation system is simply not realistic.

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

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Madam Speaker, the Member is misleading the House. My Minister of Finance has stated multiple times that we do have the money for this. He even stated it in his speech and has said it in a Point of Order.

Can she please retract her statement?

**The Speaker:** Elected Member, please continue your speech.

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** The Government needs to stop day dreaming and wake up to the harsh reality that the only problem is that bus drivers are not being held accountable and there needs to be stricter regulations and a code of conduct.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** Madam Speaker, this Government has been elected since 2021, it is now 2023. If the Motion is as necessary as they say, why has it taken two years to put it into motion?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** Madam Speaker, if the Government cannot fix the problem that they themselves have created, it is time for them to pack up their belongings and *kick rocks*.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** We on the Opposition have recognised that there is a problem, but the Government's recommended solution is not the way to solve it. Madam Speaker, maybe it is time for our Opposition to take over.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Lorlie Bryan:** "Nothing good ever comes out of hurry and frustration, only misery", is a quote by Auliq Ice— and I firmly stand by it.

Madam Speaker, instead of rushing into the problem, let us sit down and discuss, let us find a better way to solve this. Let us find a solution that can truly help the people of the Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

An hour and thirty minutes, two hours, two hours and six minutes; 6 o'clock, 7.15 and 9.30; that is the time it has taken me to get home and the times I've gotten home on various days in the last month alone. Not just me, but other people like me who waste hours of time every single day sitting, waiting, in traffic. Students and others in my constituency, the beautiful district of North Side, as well as residents of East End who arguably have it even worse than us.

I sit in the back of my parents' car, waiting with both of them, carpooling home, and will rest my head on the window of my exhausted mother's Toyota. I'll look down lines upon lines of dozens of cars stuck in traffic all moving so slowly that I am sure the pace of my walk could be faster. Why is this? It is because of the car dependency on this island due to the lack of infrastructure that this Motion would implement, so that such is not the case. I'll make a joke—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Member for East End.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker, Point of Order. Relevance.

The title of the Motion is "Implementing a New Public Transportation System in the Cayman Islands", and all I've heard this Government talk about is traffic and traffic congestion.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Madam Speaker, this Motion will solve traffic congestion in these Cayman Islands. This Motion will look at the lack of infrastructure that we currently have to tackle these issues, as the residents of East End whom this Member represents, know very well is something that we need.

Moving on... As I sit hours and hours waiting on lines and lines, I'll make a joke to my dad about walking faster and getting home before them. He laughs, we both sigh, and go back to another couple hours' of traffic. Then I get home— not just me getting home, but everyone else in North Side— only to sit and look at how little time we have left in the day to complete our assignments. Students across the island are subject to problems like this, and their performance is severely, negatively, affected by traffic and before they ask, yes, I have two printed copies of evidence this time.

*[Laughter and desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Furthermore, one of the various studies that show how traffic affects our students said it was found that the average travelling time as well as commuting distance from school negatively affects pupils' school performance.

How can we expect our students to excel in school, when the journey to get there is so arduous that it's dragging them down and holding them back? We must look at why the journey is so long; it is the lack of a proper public transport system that is leading to so many long hours in traffic, because there's miles upon miles of just car after car, with one or two people in them.

The serious traffic congestion forces the people in my constituency and across the island to make serious decisions that they should not have to make. My health or my education, my job or my wellbeing, my work or my children; we should not be forcing the people of the Cayman Islands to make those decisions, Madam Speaker.

We should be implementing a motion that moves to solve these issues, which is exactly what this Government is trying to do, though I will note that it will not be simply looking at traffic or buses alone, as some of the members of the Opposition may have seemed to imply.

We need the system because the current public transportation system has failed our people, Madam Speaker. It has failed to be a reliable, consistent and safe system for all of our residents.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Coming into Parliament today, I nearly got in an accident because of a bus on the road and if the Honourable Members of the Opposition would like, I have video evidence as well as printed photos.

Bus drivers on this current system are not motivated the way that they should be; the current system is motivated by profit, since it is commission-based. This Government seeks to change that by offering a government wage to these workers which can often improve their lives and all of the people that they serve, as it means that they will be incentivised to work fair and proper routes, so that we don't have people standing by Frank Sound Dock for hours, in mosquitoes, because bus drivers don't want to go there. Thank you.

The current bus drivers will be offered a spot, as the Minister of Tourism and Transport mentioned, to be the drivers on the new proposed system whereby we will offer training and education to the drivers that are selected to ensure the best for public transport. On top of this, my Ministry will run an education campaign which was one of the suggestions that the Opposition mentioned. *Good news!* Yes, I agree, and it is something that this Motion also looks to address.



Another Member of the Opposition noted that there needs to be stricter regulation and a code of conduct for bus drivers. Yes, I agree, and it is something that this Motion looks to address and that we will implement. Many of the suggestions made by the Opposition today have been and will be taken into account with this Motion. It is something that we look to implement and work together with the Opposition to input into our Islands.

Just as the Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage has said, anyone, or whose children, go to any of the schools on Walkers Road knows just how bad the traffic is there. That is largely due in part to the fact that many of the schools on this road do not have a bus route for their hundreds of students, so each must get there either by walking miles, or by each and every single one of their parents— or themselves driving—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your time is up.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** If I may have an additional 30 seconds to close.

**The Speaker:** You may.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Thank you.

I say that the number of cars driven to this Youth Parliament is a testament to the car dependency of our island, and that the bags under the eyes of my constituents are a testament to the abhorrent effects of traffic that could be solved by this Motion.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** The call for a new public transportation system by the wider community of Cayman is a testament to the desire of not just this Government but the entire island, and hopefully the Opposition as well, to implement and pass this Motion and have a better system for our people.

**The Speaker:** Honourable Minister, your 30 seconds are up.

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** I thank you all.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

I recognise the Elected Member for George Town South.

*[Pause]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, whether we drive or not, a car is something we can all agree has to be taken care of.

If a part of your car stops working, if your car becomes inefficient, would you not get it fixed?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Would you buy a new car if something went wrong? Would you say, “*It is my car and buying a new one would make me have a do-over?*” Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the honourable Youth Parliament Government is saying that mistakes have been made with the current system so they want to implement a new system.

Going back to my point about a car, if you bought a new one and it had mechanical issues, would you just by another and another, creating a ridiculous cycle? When would it—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Education.

### Point of Order

**Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.:** Point of Order. Misleading the House. This Government is not saying that there is simply a couple of problems and instead of trying to fix them we must make a new one, but there comes a point where a car becomes so damaged that it is not only cost effective but simply reasonable, to buy a new car rather than trying to work with the scraps of metal that you have left on the ground.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** All of that didn't really sound like a Point of Order, Madam Speaker, but I will continue with my speech.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of this Government for acknowledging the problem, but instead of simply fixing the current system of public transportation— which the Premier stated they take collective responsibility for— they are proposing a new and “comprehensive” plan.

Madam Speaker, as I look at this Motion, the Government has mentioned traffic, the 75,000 people in Cayman, and the need for a proper system; but I have to wonder Madam Speaker, what is it that they want? New buses, when the type is not the problem; more buses, to add to the traffic they want to reduce; more workers, new workers, hiring more staff, letting people go?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Madam Speaker, there are not necessarily flaws in the current system or how it is set out to work. Why create a new system? I am seriously wondering if the Members of this honourable Youth Parliament Government even know or understand what the current problems are.

Do you want to know what I think Madam Speaker? I think that the current system of public transportation is not properly maintained or regulated and, just like when you do not maintain your car, you have problems.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Instead of fixing those problems, the Government is seeking to buy a new car. In this case, the car is the public transportation system.

Madam Speaker, some drivers do not do the correct routes. It does not sound to me like routes are the problem; it sounds to me like lack of regulation is the problem.

The Elected Member for Boddin Town East stated that under this new system they would send out a bus every 15 minutes, but we spoke to the bus drivers and they told us they have to leave every 10 minutes, so Madam Speaker I don't understand the improvements that they are trying to make in this new system.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

**Point of Order**

**Hon. Keira Boddin:** Point of Order, Madam Speaker. Can I please get documentation showing that you spoke to the drivers?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Madam Speaker, I have the transcripts from our conversation.

**Hon. Keira Boddin:** Madam Speaker, how do I know that this is not typed by her and it's factual that they actually spoke to the people?

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Madam Speaker, if this honourable House would like to hear it, we have no problem playing it today, but I am not sure if we can play it. That's why we had it transcribed.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I am not sure if the honourable Youth Parliament Government has had any conversations with the public bus workers but Madam Speaker, the Opposition sure did.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** They agreed, Madam Speaker that a new system is not the answer; they agree that there are problems but the problems are as a result of improper maintenance and improper supervision. Madam Speaker—

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

**Hon. Amani Ebanks:** Point of Elucidation, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Do you give way?

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** No, Madam Speaker, I do not.

Madam Speaker, I am confused, but it seems that the Government is confused with their own Motion as well, because they say that the solution is not roads but yet they spoke so much about building roads, Madam Speaker. In their Motion they have over 75,000 people living in Cayman but then, Madam Speaker, they provide evidence that only 71,000-plus live here.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** Madam Speaker they continuously talk about policies, yet I don't see any mentioned in their Motion.

Madam Speaker, I am confused. I don't understand why they need a new system to start being vigilant. The Honourable Minister of Tourism stated that this new system would have proper management; what would make them more vigilant, and manage this new system better, if they cannot with the current system?

Madam Speaker, tomorrow starts today, and even if I agreed with this Motion, the inability to actually fix the current problems that exist makes me believe that this honourable Youth Parliament Government is incapable of creating, maintaining, and regulating a functional and comprehensive new system of public transportation.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Miss Abygale Elliott:** As a result, Madam Speaker, we the Opposition cannot support this Motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

I recognise the Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

**Hon. Keira Boddin:** Thank you Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I stand before you today to address an ongoing issue. This plague of traffic is diminishing many factors in the daily lives of the people of the Cayman Islands.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Keira Boddin:** The quality of life, the safety, the health and wellness of the people, are just a few factors

that are negatively impacted by traffic. In this small island of 22 miles, Madam Speaker, I should not be in traffic for a total of four hours trying to push and shove, left and right through bumper to bumper traffic, every single day.

Madam Speaker, our Honourable Premier already highlighted how traffic congestion can lead to an increase in air pollutants which can exacerbate respiratory problems and other health issues. This is particularly concerning for vulnerable populations such as our children, the elderly, and those members of our community with pre-existing respiratory health conditions. New research even supports the notion that high levels of stress somehow speed up the aging process—Madam Speaker, I know well. The health and wellness of our people matters and the people of this country come first.

Madam Speaker, an article in “*The Economic Times*” also speaks to the link between sleep deprivation and traffic congestion. Having to wake up before the rooster crows every morning just to get ahead of traffic congestion is bound to cause the lack of sleep. Can you imagine? Even the Elected Member of West Bay North stated that he himself has to wake up at 4.00am just to get to school for 7.00am. Now for this elected Member to impose on this Motion? *Sump'm nah right hay so.*

[Laughter]

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Keira Boddan:** Madam Speaker, not getting your recommended amount of sleep may lead to anxiety, exhaustion, frustration, and can even lead a person to drugs and/or alcohol. Madam Speaker, there are even studies that confirm that being tired is like being drunk. Like with drinking, exhaustion neurons respond more slowly, taking longer and sending weaker signals.

Let's not even mention road rage. Madam Speaker, road rage may sound like a little *fuss fuss* with that *brudda* when I didn't go straight away when the light turned green, but let me tell you something, Madam Speaker, you don't understand the extent that these people who suffer from road rage can go to. Road rage isn't something to joke about.

Congestion can increase the risk of traffic accidents due to higher traffic volumes and frustrated drivers. This can lead to injuries and fatalities, further affecting the quality of life. Just from frustration and lack of patience, it leads to driving aggressively, adding one more accident alert to Cayman Marl Road's Instagram page.

In 2021, officers attended 2,633 motor vehicle accidents. On average, there are 51 motor vehicle accidents a week in the Cayman Islands. Madam Speaker, 51 motor vehicle accidents in seven days?! This is just ridiculous and embarrassing.

Cayman Loop News shared that in 2021 there were a total of 312 summons in relation to driving under the influence (DUI) offences; approximately 36 per cent of all DUI offences in 2021 also involved motor vehicle accidents, with nine fatalities on Cayman Islands' roads. Speeding, dangerous driving, alcohol and drug consumption are identified as factors that have contributed to road fatalities in 2021. Madam Speaker, do you know how long it takes our emergency response vehicles to reach our victims? Traffic is so thick, that you can just imagine.

Madam Speaker, it is obvious that there is a lack of consideration for safety in the current public bus system. Just take a look outside, it is evident that the mad driving continues 'til this day, and the lives of our residents are in jeopardy. I am sure if you see the extent these bus drivers take to get as many passengers as possible into their buses, trying to get as much profit as they can, just leads to them packing these people in their buses like sardines.

This madness needs to get under control and we as the Government feel that this improved bus system will do just that. We want our people to feel safe enough and as comfortable as possible when using public transportation. To ensure that the safety of our buses is enforced, I will be working closely with the Attorney General to ensure that laws which include appropriate penalties for crimes that take place in public transportation are in place.

Madam Speaker, we as the Government have expectations; expectations for our country and expectations for our people. Madam Speaker, I am just sick and tired of sitting in my car gazing at the licence plate in front of me every single day for hours on end. This problem needs to be solved and this Government has a solution.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

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

I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to speak on the public transportation Motion presented by this Honourable Youth Parliament Government.

There is no doubt that a reliable public transport system is extremely important, especially in these times of industrialisation and mechanisation. As established by my fellow Opposition Members, the current public transport system which, might I add, is regulated by this Government, is in need of development.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** However, who is to say that there is a need for an entirely new system?

Madam Speaker, in the Opposition's eyes, this Motion is unnecessary. To start, the public transport system in the Cayman Islands is governed, as previously mentioned, by a government board known as the Public Transport Unit. This unit envelopes all public transport vehicles and licensing in the Cayman Islands. Their transportation services include public buses, taxis, depot tours, limousines, water sports and school buses. Along with their physical presentation, they also have a website, [www.caymantransport.ky](http://www.caymantransport.ky), where they have made bus routes and maps, taxi fare schedules, permit application and permit renewals, accessible to the public.

Madam Speaker, the Government clearly seems to have a good foundation which they can simply build on or amend, to further develop the public transport system therefore, there is no need for an entirely new one.

Madam Speaker, what this Government simply lacks is some guidance—

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Especially with these air statistics they seem to pull out of nowhere.

Madam Speaker, it is evident that the current public transport system has all the necessary infrastructure and planning that is needed for an excellent and efficient system.

Madam Speaker, like one of the Opposition Members before me said, can you *riddle me this and riddle me that* as to why this Government has made such a contradictory motion? The title of the Motion reads, Implementing a New Public Transportation System while in the "Be it therefore resolved" statement it says, "**implementing a comprehensive public transport system**". According to my understanding, new and comprehensive are two different meanings so which one is it?

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Is it new or is it comprehensive because either way, both of them would be unnecessary.

In continuation, what is this comprehensive—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jelani Hanson:** Point of Order. I'm not really sure I understand that one. Can't something be two things at the same time? It can't be new and comprehensive?

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** First of all, I am pretty sure that is a Point of Elucidation as he was asking a question, and obviously *not*; if something is new, how can it be comprehensive? That make sense to you? Anyways, continuing...

Madam Speaker, I have to wonder how comprehensive will the system be. In my estimation, this Government could be proposing a motion that is comprehensively bad; meaning that they have comprehensively achieved nothing.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Not only this, Madam Speaker, but it seems as though it doesn't take a motion for the Government to contradict themselves because on one hand, they say, *oh, we are not going to implement roads*; and then the next Honourable Member gets up and says, *oh, we're going to implement bus lanes*. Madam Speaker, what is going on?

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Not only this, but it seems as though this Government wants to clog up the system once again as there are so many things going into this one public transport system and yet nothing has come to fruition.

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** On one hand, the Government has established a five-year step plan programme that is set to last from 2019 to 2024 which entails:

- Operating the environment;
- Governance;
- Themes and strategic goals;
- Strategic and future planning;
- Education and training;
- Financial and human resources;
- Innovation and many more.

Moreover, the Government, as mentioned by one of the Opposition Members, has invested almost \$200,000— if not that much— for local firm, Deloitte, to work on a public transportation system plan for the Cayman Islands; so again my question is, which one is it? This Government seems to have their affairs in a knot that seems uncombable. Well, listen, I know the solution. I can give you a little conditioner for that and make the detangling process a little bit easier.

[Laughter]

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, this Government is preaching reliability and dependency, but even with this so called comprehensively improved public transport system, can you tell me how are they going to create a system that I would want to leave my Audi that I worked hard hours for, to ride a bus that I don't even know will get me to my job that paid for my Audi at the required time?

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, I am not sure if this Government has thought about this question and if they have not, they certainly need to start thinking about it now.

Madam Speaker, a wave; it seems a wave of confusion has affected us Opposition, because this Government seems so confused that they have us confused. Not only are they saying that they have not fulfilled their five-step programme, but they are saying that because of their incompetence, they need to implement a whole new public transport system.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** To conclude, the Opposition agrees—

**The Speaker:** Honourable Member, your time is up. I'll give you 30 seconds to conclude.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Thank you.

To conclude, the Opposition agrees that the current public transport system is in need of amendments but it is apparent, it is clear as day, clear as crystal some may say, that there is no need for an entirely new public transport system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

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

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

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

*[Pause]*

If no other Member wishes to speak, I will ask the Elected Member for George Town Central to exercise her right of reply.

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Government is here to serve the people of the of the Cayman Islands and we are not going to allow politics or favourites to get in the way of ensuring that the people of Cayman are not ill-served simply because we are blinded by politics.

I sat and listened, Madam Speaker, but all I heard was complaining from the Opposition Members. I heard no other solutions from them or I heard one—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** Madam Speaker, *Point of Order*.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of the Opposition:** The Honourable Member is misleading the House. If she was listening to our speeches with those God-given ears, she would have heard that we have proposed many solutions that this honourable Government can use, so I would like her to retract the statement that we have not proposed any solutions because that is very much incorrect.

**The Speaker:** Elected Member for George Town Central, I ask you to please retract that statement which states that the Opposition did not provide solutions.

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Madam Speaker, may I please finish the sentence? Thank you.

The sentence states, or I heard one or two solutions, Madam Speaker. I am not saying they said yes—

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Elected Member for West Bay North.

**Mr. Zachary Allen:** Madam Speaker, once again, if the Honourable Member was listening with those ears of hers, she would have realised that almost every Opposition Member that stood in regard to this Motion gave alternative means to this Motion, so once again I would like to ask her to retract her statement.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Please continue.

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Madam Speaker, moving into addressing the matters that were addressed.

Why implement a new system, people may ask? The answer to that Madam Speaker, is that the current system is simply ineffective and not reliable for people as the majority of it is privately owned and clearly run by profit, rather than efficiency.

Madam Speaker, we are not forcing the people to use this public transport system; we are implementing an improved one so that—

[Pause]

**Miss Elizabeth Thomas:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We are implementing an improved one so that the mother with a child that you spoke of can rely on it rather than standing in the hot sun, looking at a Burger King ad, wondering when a bus will come.

Madam Speaker, there's this proverb, "*Kill two birds with one stone*". Implementing this Motion will tackle the issues of transportation and traffic congestion moving forward. We are focusing on the system as a whole, not just buses or traffic congestion alone. Many of the suggestions brought forward dealt with what we have mentioned. This is why we are creating a new system, and not simply trying to sail on a broken ship.

Expense, Madam Speaker: We have the funds to support this Motion. I want to reemphasise on the point that the Minister of Finance stated that we have the funds to support implementing this Motion.

Madam Speaker, the development will be supported by the continued advancement of technology that provides accurate and real-time information on bus route schedules. This information will be displayed via digital information panels at stops and terminals and can be accessible by users' On the Go app. For long-term development, the Government considers investigating the accessibility for public buses through bus lanes and bus stops where adequate.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition of this Youth Parliament is really misleading the House by bringing up solutions the Government already mentioned in relation to government's implementation of a new transport system.

**The Speaker:** Due to time, may I ask the Opposition Members to please sit and refrain from using Points of Order and Points of Elucidation.

Thank you.

**Miss. Elizabeth Thomas:** Madam Speaker, if the Opposition was really listening, they would not be reinstating our solutions.

Partnering with private foreign businesses takes jobs away from Caymanians. This Motion not only seeks to provide a reliable system, but to also open job opportunities for the people of the Cayman Islands, especially for those in Bodden Town in Central.

[Desk thumping]

**Miss. Elizabeth Thomas:** Madam Speaker, the representative of East End claims to have had conversations with the bus drivers, but may I ask where the physical evidence for this is? How do we know that is truthful? Madam Speaker, this is not Cayman Marl Road, it is Youth Parliament.

[Inaudible interjections]

**Miss. Elizabeth Thomas:** Madam Speaker, if I may. The Elected Member for Bodden Town Central stated that he couldn't support this Motion, but he's the one to tell Government that he wanted to move this Motion.

An Elected Member of the Opposition claimed that the Government was not focusing on infrastructure by stating that the Government was only focusing on traffic, but Madam Speaker the public transport system that the Government wants to implement is because of the issue of traffic congestion.

The Opposition continued to say that all the Government is debating about is traffic congestion, but if they had actually read Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023: Implementing a new Transportation System [in the Cayman Islands], they would not continue to ask these ridiculous questions. It seems this Government's words go in through one ear and out the other.

The Elected Member stated that the Government does not know the problems that we face. They contradict themselves, Madam Speaker. We do recognise the issues, but they are hopping on the little things. The Opposition seems to try to ignore the problem by bringing up the little inaccuracies instead of targeting the real problem. Who do they serve, themselves or the people?

It was stated during the debate that Government can't maintain a system. Madam Speaker, this is why we have proposed this Motion. I really don't think the Opposition is listening to our speeches or reading the Motion properly. The Opposition is putting words into the Government's mouth. I want to know who said we weren't going to implement roads.

Madam Speaker, this current Government is not here to simply collect a pay check, but to better the lives of the people who voted for us because they believe we can make a difference. They believe that we can better their lives.

Madam Speaker, the people really need this Motion and who are we to deny them this right?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The question is: Be it therefore resolved that this Youth Parliament Government considers implementing a comprehensive public transport system with related infrastructure, features, and incentives.

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

**AYES and NOES.**

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

I recognise the Elected Member for East End.

**Hon. Bethany Mitchell, Deputy Speaker:** Madam Speaker, I would like to beg for a division.

**The Speaker:** Madam Clerk, please take the division.

**Division No. 2-2023**

<b>Ayes: 11</b>	<b>Noes: 10</b>
Hon. Lili Anne Aleria	Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun
Hon. Alexander Harris	Miss Abbey Walton
Hon. Amani Ebanks	Mr. Raldayne Thomas
Hon. Keira Bodden	Miss Raeann Matute-Scott
Hon. Ashley Ebanks	Mr. Christian Campbell*
Hon. Chloe Reid	Miss Abygale Elliott
Hon. Jelani Hanson	Hon. Bethany Mitchell**
Hon. Chad Powell, Jr.	Miss Lorlie Bryan
Miss Elizabeth Thomas	Mr. Christopher Sanchez
Mr. Pranav Anu	Mr. Zachary Allen
Miss Mia Groves	

\***Mr. Christian Campbell:** *Sincerely, No.*

\*\***Hon. Bethany Mitchell:** *With my pride and dignity, No.*

*[Pause]*

**The Speaker:** The result of the division is 11 Ayes and 10 Noes.

**Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 2 of 2023 passed.**

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** That concludes the proceedings of this Honourable 16th Youth Parliament.

I will now call on the Honourable Premier to move a motion for the adjournment

**ADJOURNMENT**

**The Premier, Hon. Lili Anne Aleria:** Madam Speaker, I move the adjournment of this Honourable 16th Youth Parliament sine die.

Madam Speaker, before you put the vote on the adjournment, I wish to express a vote of thanks.

I would like to thank Harneys Law Firm for being our sponsor for another year; the Honourable Kenneth Bryan, the Toastmasters who gave us lessons at the beginning of our Youth Parliament journey.

Mr. Ezzard Miller; the Ministry of Finance; Department of Communications, the Clerks of Parliament, the Acting Serjeant at Arms, our respective schools and, of course, our parents and guardians, and all who supported us throughout our 2022 to 2023 Youth Parliament journey.

**The Speaker:** I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of Opposition:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

In addition to those mentioned by the Honourable Premier, on behalf of the Opposition, I would like to express vote of thanks to the Ministry of Tourism and Transport and Cayman Airways, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Roy McTaggart; Mr. Joseph Hew, the Legal Drafting Department; the Public Transport Unit and the public bus drivers with whom we met when preparing our debate.

Mr. Jude Scott, Radio Cayman, our respective schools, our parents and guardians; and the Honourable Reon Porter— Youth Parliament's longest serving veteran and the first-ever Caymanian youth Parliamentarian to be nominated for the Green Heart Hero Award, who took time out to mentor us and help us with our speeches.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jhenelle Colquhoun, Leader of Opposition:** Lastly, Madam Speaker, I give a big, big, big thank you to all those who supported us throughout the 2022 to 2023 Youth Parliament journey.

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Reon Porter for your commitment to the Youth Parliament of the Cayman Islands.

The Motion is that this Honourable 16th Youth Parliament does stand adjourned, sine die. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against No.

**AYES.**

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

This Honourable 16<sup>th</sup> Youth Parliament now stands adjourn sine die.

**The House stood adjourned at 4.09 pm sine die.**