



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Meeting of the 2023/2024 Session
First Sitting

STATE OPENING, THRONE SPEECH & BUDGET ADDRESS

Friday
8 December, 2023
(Pages 1-32)

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

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

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. Heather D. Boddin, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Parliamentary Secretary to Tourism <i>and</i> Social Development, Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Mr. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town East
Mr. Joseph X. Hew, MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town North
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman
Mr. David C. Wight, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town West

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Boddin Town West
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APOLOGIES

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, JP, NP, MP	Elected Member for George Town South

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
SECOND SPECIAL MEETING OF THE 2023/24 SESSION
FRIDAY
8 DECEMBER, 2023
10:12AM

[Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Speaker, Presiding]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

The Second Meeting of the 2023-2024 Session of Parliament is now commenced.

I have apologies for absence from the honourable Member from George Town South who is off Island.

I've just received unfortunate news from the former Premier, Honourable Wayne Panton, that unfortunately he had an accident yesterday, and has broken several ribs and certainly, will not be here today and may well miss the entire Meeting. We all should pray and hope for his speedy recovery.

I invite Pastor [Headley] Young to grace us with prayers. Please stand.

PRAYERS

Pastor Headley Young: Thank you. Let us pray.

Our sovereign God and Father, for you this morning, we acknowledge your sovereignty, the only one who is and is to come.

We present to You this morning, this honourable House, and the people of the Cayman Islands. We are grateful to you, Lord, for your grace and your mercies towards us throughout the year. As we approach this day, we thank You that You are right here with us this morning; and as we place, Lord, this morning before you, our Governor, our Speaker of the House, our Honourable Premier, and all Elected Members who have submitted themselves to this country to bear out their responsibility and their duty, I pray in the name of Jesus that whatever they do, they will do it professionally to the honour and to the glory of your Name.

We pray for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in every decision making. We pray, God, even right now for the Honourable G. Wayne Panton who has had an accident, that God You will be merciful to Him. We thank you for the time that he has served in this honourable House.

Bless this your people again. Let everything be done to the honour and glory of your Name, and at the end, your Name will be glorified. We give you thanks and praise now in Jesus' name.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Thank you, Pastor Young.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: I want to welcome two former senior Members of this House to these proceedings.

The Honourable Truman Bodden, who was Leader of Government Business for quite some time, and the Honourable Linford Pearson, who served in a number of roles including Deputy Leader of Government Business, as well as Speaker. Thank you all for your attendance.

I will now call on Honourable Premier to move a Motion for the suspension of the House to allow her Excellency the Governor, to present the Throne Speech.

MOTION FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Premier and Minister for Finance & Economic Development, Education and District Administration & Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this honourable House do suspend to await the arrival of her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, to receive a gracious message from the Throne.

The Speaker: The Motion is that this House do suspend to await the arrival of Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, to receive a gracious message from the Throne.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: That the honourable House rise to await the arrival of Her Excellency the Governor to receive a message from the Throne.

Proceedings suspended at 10:17 a.m.

[Pause]

ARRIVAL OF HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: Please be seated.

THRONE SPEECH

**Delivered by Her Excellency the Governor
Mrs. Jane Owen**

His Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen: Mr. Speaker. That's better.

Honourable Members of Parliament of the Cayman Islands, ladies and gentlemen— good morning.

On behalf of His Majesty, King Charles III, it is a great honour for me to stand before you today, to deliver my first Throne Speech as your Governor. I'm humbled to have this opportunity to serve the people of the Cayman Islands, and I will continue to work to the best of my ability to promote the interests of all who call this beautiful place their home.

Since arriving here in April, I've had the opportunity to consult and work with many honourable representatives seated here in our Parliament, today. I would like to thank you for your support and advice, and to commend you all on your commitment and your service to our community. Our democracy continues to thrive and deliver, and we can all be proud of that.

I would like to extend my congratulations, again, to the Honourable Sir Alden McLaughlin, upon his election as Speaker of this distinguished House. I offer my thanks to the Honourable Wayne Panton, our former Premier, for his counsel and friendship in the last Government, and I want to express my admiration and gratitude to the Honourable Premier, Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, for her leadership of the United People's Movement (UPM) Government.

As I look around the Chamber, I see many familiar faces on our Government bench, and I would like to congratulate the UPM on forming a new government, with renewed focus and a new budget, to present at this Session. I would also like to pay tribute to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Roy McTaggart, and his colleagues on that side of the House, for the work you do to scrutinise and contribute to the policies and decisions you will agree in the coming days.

The strong principles that we can be so proud of here, in our Parliament, are part of the shared values that root us in our deep historic relationship with the United Kingdom. This partnership continues to grow, and to demonstrate clear benefits in an increasingly uncertain world.

The Joint Ministerial Council in London, in November, hosted by Foreign Office Minister David Rutley, culminated in a declaration signed by the Overseas Territories reinforcing our commitment to a modern, and transparent partnership; and our collective

ambition to deliver a prosperous and secure future for all of our people.

Over the coming months, the UK proposes to agree a new Bilateral Compact with each separate Overseas Territory that would like to do so, setting out the responsibilities and obligations we share, and highlighting our priorities for the future. The Honourable Premier has already expressed her wish for early discussions on our Compact, and I look forward to working with the Government, and Parliament, as we consult widely during the process to ensure that our bilateral agreement sets the right direction for a strong future relationship.

I'm proud that Cayman has chosen to be part of the British global family and, with that, to join the United Kingdom's commitment to act as a force for good in the world. This means, respect for human rights, the rule of law, and defending the multilateral rules-based system embodied in the United Nations and other International Treaties. As one of the five permanent members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council; as the world's sixth largest economy; a leading voice in the World Health Organisation, the World Trade Organisation, and G7; and as a founding Member of NATO, the United Kingdom (UK) will continue to uphold the freedoms and values that our forefathers fought so hard to defend.

In recent weeks, we have all seen the tragedy unfolding in the Middle East. Israel has suffered the worst terror attack in its history, and Palestinian civilians are experiencing a devastating humanitarian crisis. The UK is working intensively to get much needed aid into Gaza, to prevent regional escalation, and to re-establish progress towards a two-state solution, which is the only way to ensure lasting peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

The United Kingdom will also continue to stand united with our international partners against Russia's unprovoked attack on Ukraine's sovereignty— a violation of international law and the UN Charter. That is why we have worked with allies, to introduce the most comprehensive sanctions package ever imposed on a major economy. These measures are having a growing impact on Russia, and I want to highlight today, the key role that Cayman plays in sanctions' implementation as a global centre for funds and investment.

Through operation Hector, which joins up information and enforcement across government and the private sector, we have been able to freeze around \$9 billion in Russian assets and, as the world continues to close Russian attempts to circumvent the sanctions regime, we will continue to play our part to ensure that Cayman holds fast in support of peace, stability and the rule of law.

Cayman's core role within the international financial system has also been in the spotlight, as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) removed our jurisdiction from its grey list and lifted the need for enhanced

monitoring. It's hard to overstate how significant this move is for us: it means that FATF recognises that Cayman has the commitment and the processes in place, to enforce and combat money laundering and illicit finance. It judges that our efforts are both robust and sustainable, and it praises the close work between government regulators and the private sector in ensuring that our financial centre meets, or exceeds international standards.

The task does not stop here. We will continue to work with the United Kingdom, the European Union and other international partners to evolve workable new measures for oversight and transparency including through our new Beneficial Ownership Transparency Act and associated regulations which will come into force in 2024.

I want to formally express my thanks to the Honourable Deputy Premier André Ebanks and his partner in *fighting crime*, our Honourable Attorney General Sam Bulgin for the role they both played in steering us through to a successful conclusion of the FATF review.

[Desk thumping]

Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen: As we consider Cayman's position within the international context, our minds turn inevitably also towards the question of security, crime, risks and threats and how we can best manage and repel them.

This is an issue close to my heart and to my in-tray as I carry out my constitutional responsibilities for security in our Islands. I was grateful earlier in my tenure to have the privilege of working with former Police Commissioner, Derek Byrne, who has passed on his leadership to our excellent new Commissioner, Kurt Walton. I commend Commissioner Walton on his open, collaborative and strategic approach and I reaffirm the priorities we have agreed. We will continue to make Cayman a hostile environment for criminal activity, achieving this through 'feet on the ground' community policing, as well as a targeted response to specific incidents, especially those involving violence and firearms. We will continue to build our capability in investigations and forensics, as well as CCTV coverage and intelligence gathering.

We share a strong belief that effective policing can only be achieved if it includes strategies for prevention, rehabilitation and safeguarding of vulnerable individuals and groups. That is why we will continue to steer the National Security Council to develop cross cutting strategies. For example, to combat the flow of drugs, reaching out across government and working with education, health, family services and WORC teams to pre-empt criminal activity and to provide a choice for people who may be standing at a crossroad in their lives.

We are also committed to a renewed focus on road safety and the strict enforcement of penalties for

those who put others in danger. As we enter the party season, I would remind everyone that we can save lives and avoid a traumatic Christmas for many families if we all select a designated driver and never get behind the steering wheel under the influence of drink or drugs or with a mobile phone in our hand.

As we open our parliamentary session today, I know that we are all focused on the budget proposals which will be the subject of discussion next week. It is perhaps a good moment to pause and ponder that these proposals will be hotly debated, I'm sure, precisely because they are the vehicle through which the Government delivers for our people and allocates funding to priority projects and policies. I want to recognise here today that the steep cost of living increase provides a stern backdrop for your deliberations, and a call to action as we make plans for the coming two-year financial cycle.

Cayman has a high reputation among the UK's Overseas Territories for prudent budget management and I commend the Honourable Premier for her work to remain within the boundaries of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) agreed between Cayman and the UK and for her efforts to achieve a balance of revenue raising and efficiencies while enabling growth in priority areas.

In a few moments, we will hear from Government Ministers as they set out these priorities for the coming period. I do not plan to repeat them here. I would simply offer you my thoughts on what I regard as some of the most important areas.

Firstly, education: this is the bedrock of growth and the hope of our young people. We must continue to strengthen our schools, create new opportunities in tech, in apprenticeships and in vocational choices as well as providing affordable routes to university including and perhaps especially in the United Kingdom.

Secondly, health: as our population continues to grow, and age like me, we are all exploring better ways to deliver healthcare and to promote more healthy lifestyles.

Next is infrastructure: there is quite a long list of projects on our horizon in transport, housing, tourism assets and waste management. In all of this, we need to find the right balance between protecting our environment and keeping safe from hurricanes and flooding while responding to the needs of our citizens and our businesses.

This brings me on to the environment and we speak of it during a historic week when the 28th UN Climate Conference is taking place in the United Arab Emirates. His Majesty King Charles gave the opening speech in which he noted that the world is dreadfully far off track in its efforts to retain the goal of keeping global warming within the 1.5 degree limit. He called on everyone, public and private sector to pool their efforts to get data, to use technology and to work constructively together in order to, as he put it, "keep hope alive". I believe we can do the same here in the Cayman

Islands, building on our strong track record of marine parks and our determination to create a happy, healthy and beautiful environment, which can support both lives and livelihoods for future generations to enjoy.

As we reach the end of the hurricane season, I also want to mention the importance of our *resilience* in the widest sense of the word, recalling the renewed focus we intend to have the National Security Council on Risk Management. This means continuing to prepare for weather events, reviewing the security of our massive marine boundaries and ports of entry, planting out greater food security and being ready for unexpected events. Remembering how well our COVID strategy served us. I want to pay tribute in particular to the way in which our crisis, first responders worked together to prepare and protect us. Thank you to Hazard Management, to our emergency services, our regiment, the Red Cross and the many, many other partners who support them.

Many of the above areas I have just mentioned, sit firmly within the responsibilities of this House rather than Governor's Office, but I am pleased to have developed a great working relationship with all Ministers, and indeed Ministries so that we can communicate and share ideas. The United Kingdom remains committed to supporting Cayman in all of its domestic endeavours, whether this be in transport planning, policing advice, crisis training, public health, biodiversity conservation, or seabed mapping. And it is never a one-way street. Our partnership is built on mutual benefit and respect, and offers an often-surprising source of inspiration and opportunities for us both to learn and improve.

I am grateful for the hard work of everyone in Governor's Office and Government House who support me in managing our busy agenda, making new links and creating some fun ways to open our wonderful home on Seven Mile Beach to as many different people as we possibly can.

As we progress, our important national agenda, effective governance is key to delivery. We rely on our independent commissions, the Judiciary, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Auditor General and the Ombudsman to ensure that we are performing our duties to the highest standards of integrity and due process.

Through the leadership of our Honourable Deputy Governor Franz Manderson, I applaud our civil service for their tireless work. The DG has recently introduced a refreshed strategy to further improve delivery, accountability, customer service and teamwork across the whole of Government. I know he joins me in thanking all of our chief officers who form the interface between political decisions and policy delivery and who work to ensure every day (and often very late into every evening) that what we agree here in Parliament or in Cabinet remains on track, on time and on target.

As I speak to you all today, I look back over the first seven months of my time here as Governor. I came to listen and to learn, to work hard and to be of service.

I am immensely grateful for the welcome I have received, the advice, the kindness and all of your stories.

I have enjoyed visiting Cayman Brac and Little Cayman as well as having many opportunities to visit constituencies and communities here in Grand Cayman. I have not met everyone yet but I have loved talking to our seniors, our young people, the people who lead our charities and businesses, our cultural icons and our sports people. When I go walking on the beach every morning it is so heartening to hear many, many people coming up and saying 'hello' because that makes sure I always start my day in a very good mood.

Now, I am looking forward to a Christmas filled with friendship and fellowship. And in order to ensure that we complete our parliamentary session in good time for that, I will conclude here, in wishing everyone a very happy Christmas and in committing myself again to working in support of this House and the service of all our people.

God bless the Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

[Applause]

DEPARTURE OF HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

Procession departed in the following order:

*The Serjeant-at-Arms
The Honourable Speaker
Her Excellency the Governor
The Governor's Aide-de-Camp
Pastor Headley Young*

Proceedings resumed at 10.48 a.m.

The Speaker: Parliament is resumed. Please be seated.

VOTE OF THANKS TO HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: I now call on the father of the House to propose a vote of thanks to Her Excellency the Governor, for her gracious address.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable Parliament does record its grateful thanks to Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, for the gracious address delivered at this Sitting.

The Speaker: The question is that this Honourable Parliament does record its grateful thanks for Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, for the address delivered at this Sitting.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: That this Honourable Parliament does record its grateful thanks for Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, for the address delivered at this sitting.

MOTION TO DEFER DEBATE ON THE THRONE SPEECH

The Speaker: I now call on the Honourable Premier to move the Motion to defer debate on the Throne Speech until Monday, 11th December, 2023.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that:

BE IT RESOLVED that the debate on the Address delivered by Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, be deferred until Monday the 11th December, 2023.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier.

The question is:

BE IT RESOLVED that the debate on the Address delivered by Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, be deferred until Monday the 11th December, 2023.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: That the debate on the address delivered by her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen, be deferred until Monday the 11th December, 2023.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

PLAN & ESTIMATES FOR THE 2024 AND 2025 FINANCIAL YEARS

BUDGET STATEMENTS FOR THE 2024 AND 2025 FINANCIAL YEARS

PURCHASE AGREEMENTS FOR THE 2024 AND 2025 FINANCIAL YEARS

OWNERSHIP AGREEMENTS FOR THE 2024 AND 2025 FINANCIAL YEARS

The Speaker: The Honourable Premier, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the following documents with respect to the Government's 2024 and 2025 Financial Years:

- Plan & Estimates for the Government of the Cayman Islands.
- Budget Statements for Ministries, Portfolios and Offices.
- Purchase Agreements for Statutory Authorities, Government Companies and Non-Governmental Output Suppliers.
- Ownership Agreements For Statutory Authorities and Government Companies.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

When you invite me to speak on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill which appears further down on the Order Paper today, I will exercise my right to expound on the Appropriation Bill.

The Speaker: Very well, Madam Premier. Clerk?

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I now call on the Honourable Premier to deliver the Government's Policy Statement.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as you would be fully cognisant, the theme for this year's Budget Policy Statement adopted, endorsed by my colleagues and the United People's Movement is: "Nurturing Our Future: A United Sustainable Path to Recovery, Hope and Prosperity".

As I rise to present the plans of the Government, first and foremost, I give thanks to Almighty God for His grace, His lovingkindness, both individually as a Parliament and as a nation that we can all gather to deliberate on the people's business and recommit ourselves as instruments of His will.

Indeed, it is a great privilege to be elected as a representative of the people and to be further given this tremendous responsibility of leading this Government. It is my favourite prayer that God will grant me the requisite wisdom, knowledge and understanding to so do.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen for her thoughtful delivery of the Throne Speech this morning

and her commitment to modern and transparent partnership and collaborative efforts to deliver a prosperous and secure future for all of our people. I also want to recognise Her Excellency's diligent efforts to take the time to get to know our people by reaching out and making herself available to all the people and communities of these beautiful Cayman Islands. It has been my observation that as Governor, she brings incredible wisdom, proportionality and balance in her approach that truly represents our monarch, His Majesty King Charles III, while respecting the Caymanian way of life.

I am also very grateful to my Cabinet colleagues who came together with the united purpose of finalising this said budget. We have had a great deal, a number of challenges over the past few months. We have weathered many a storm. We have made tough decisions, but the love of our country and the interests of our people keeps us united and we will continue to use this as our guiding light and principle.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: The United People's Movement (UPM) has hit the ground running.

I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate my three Parliamentary Secretaries: the Honourable McKeever Bush, Mr. Bernie Bush and Ms. Heather Bodden, who received their instruments of appointment from Governor Owen on Wednesday, 6th day of December. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience and will be supporting several Cabinet Ministers to deliver on Government's priorities over the next 14 months.

I also want to thank my friends on the other side of the aisle—and I call them my friends because indeed they are—for their conscientious engagement with all of the issues which we all seek to address for the betterment of all of our constituents.

Yes, we do have the naysayers, those who questioned our motives in this honourable House, but as former United States [President], Theodore Roosevelt said in his famous Citizens in the Republic speech in 1910:

“It is not the critic who count; nor the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man [or woman] who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs; who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall

never be with those cold and timid souls who never knew victory nor defeat.”

Mr. Speaker, with the help of Almighty God, the United People's Movement is willing to take on the challenges that confront us because we believe we can make a difference in the lives of our people and we therefore urge our residents to continue to pray daily for those of us in authority.

I also want to express my gratitude for your acceptance of this most important task in presiding over this esteemed House of Parliament. Your duties are indeed very challenging. However, you do bring to the table a tremendous wealth of knowledge and a deep passion for the history of our beloved country and our Parliament which no doubt served this honourable House and all Members extremely well.

We are indeed confident that our renewed sense of purpose, unity and commitment will assist in charting the way forward as we look to create a sustainable path to recovery, hope and prosperity.

Vision

From our commitments, therefore, we see a springing up of our vision. The vision of a unified Government and country by extension, focused on continuing our Islands' ongoing economic recovery in a measured and sustainable manner that provides hope and prosperity to all Caymanians.

Mission

When our Government was recently formed, we chose the roles and assignments of each Member to emphasise the group's shared ideals as we continue to work together in the pursuit of the Government's five broad outcomes for the people of the Cayman Islands, which are as follows:

- Improve the Quality of Life for Caymanians;
- Enhance our Competitiveness while Meeting International Standards;
- Modernise the Government to Improve Public Sector Performance;
- Future Proof to Increase Resilience; and
- Protect and Promote Caymanian Culture, Heritage and Identity.

Mr. Speaker, you see, our overarching goals have not changed. This Government remains determined to empower Caymanians to live productive and prosperous lives and ensure that future generations have much better opportunities.

Building On Our Achievements

Mr. Speaker, as Members of this honourable House will see in the 2024-2025 budget, the key priorities over the next 14 months will build on the successes of the past several years and ensure continued and

renewed commitment to people-centred policies and projects. The wellbeing and success of our people is at the core of the 2024-2026 Strategic Policy Statement and therefore it remains our guiding principle.

The Government continues to focus on preparing our people to deal with the realities of an ever-changing world and equip them to face the future and hope with utmost confidence.

Mr. Speaker, over the past two and a half years, we have seen our economy on its way to full recovery, primarily due to the robust increases in most sectors led by construction, real estate and the financial services. The prudent actions that were taken after the pandemic have borne economic fruit.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Wayne Panton, Member for Newlands, namely for his dedication [and] his service during his tenure as Premier. It is through his leadership of the country in the second half of the pandemic that we were able to successfully reopen the country's borders without having to re-implement any lockdown measures. This is another remarkable story against all odds.

Mr. Speaker, the economic expansion we are undergoing is expected to continue with a projected growth of 3.1 per cent in 2023 and 2.2 per cent in 2024.

However, along with economic growth, we have also had to deal with inflationary pressures, which are not, Mr. Speaker, for the avoidance of doubt, generated within our local economy, but it is driven by significant global events and occurrences way beyond our shores. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate accelerated to an average of 9.5 per cent for 2022. The average inflation for 2023 is projected at 5.2 per cent, and for 2024, inflation is projected at 2.5 per cent. These inflationary pressures have become a heavy burden on the shoulders of all of our people, increasing the cost of living for them and their families. We have seen the unsustainable situation and have taken action to relieve this burden.

Mr. Speaker, some of the substantive actions that we have taken to ease the burden of the cost of living include but are not limited to:

- Free meals to all of our primary and secondary public schools;
- Reintroduction of the private school grant;
- Increase 'A' level scholarship funding to cover the two years;
- Increased funding for scholarships at both the undergraduate and the graduate school levels, plus an additional stipend to cover expenses, such as travel to Jamaica or other ways for a visa; that is student visas.

We have also increased:

- The seamen and veteran benefits;
- [Benefits for] senior citizens and people living with disabilities. They will also receive, as was announced by my Deputy this week, an

additional \$250 for the upcoming Christmas season;

- Public service pensioners, who have served for 10 years or more, will also receive an ex-gratia uplift, starting this month.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have sought to cushion the blow from the inflation through the following measures:

- Reducing fees for seniors and motor vehicle licensing and passport applications;
- Providing financial and technical support to cover 400 micro and small businesses through the Cayman Islands Centre for Business Development;
- We have waived import duties on feminine products and baby items;
- We have increased the duty allowance from CI\$500 to CI\$1000 for returning residents to the Cayman Islands, commencing the 1st December, [2023] and ending the 5th January, 2024. Bearing in mind, should we work late, for those civil servants who may miss the Christmas holiday, they can take it up for the Old Year's Night into the New Year. Hence the reason for ending 5th January.

Mr. Speaker, it is important in the area of housing that we have also committed to help Caymanians secure a home that they can afford, and we have followed through on our commitment in several ways.

Earlier this year, amendments to the stamp duty concessions for prospective Caymanian homeowners made it far more affordable for Caymanians to buy both first and second properties. The amendments will help these Caymanian homeowners in the following way by:

- Increasing the value of existing [property] prices eligible for a full waiver of stamp duty for first-time Caymanian buyers; and
- Introducing a new formal tier of stamp duty concessions for Caymanians purchasing their second property.

In real terms, Mr. Speaker, the revised concessions will provide significant financial relief for Caymanians purchasing home or land. For example, a young couple purchasing their first home for \$600,000 would normally have to pay \$45,000 in stamp duty. The revised concession will now save them this \$45,000, which they can put towards their children's education or save for their very own retirement.

While we are focused on our economic recovery, our policies have remained people-centric. We reduced unemployment to the lowest rate in decades Mr. Speaker, and encouraged the growth of small businesses.

In addition to ensuring that Caymanian families benefit from the country's economic development and

supporting [growth] in the local economy and tourism sector, we also acted to protect and sustain our Islands' key economic pillar - the financial services industry.

Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce

The Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce, Mr. Speaker, remains very adamant that financial services remain a strong, resilient driver in our economy which presents significant educational and employment opportunities for our people, and contributes in immeasurable ways to the expansion and robustness of our economy. It will continue to be supported and promoted by this Government, the United People's Movement (UPM) Administration.

Mr. Speaker, you and all Honourable Members may recall media reports detailing our progress in being removed from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list in October this year.

This tremendous effort made by the Government, in particular, the Member for West Bay South, my Deputy Premier who is also Minister of Financial Services, worked hand in glove with our Honourable Attorney General, our regulators, our Islands' financial services industry for over two and a half years to achieve this outcome. It demonstrates what can be accomplished through unity, determination and foresight.

As a highly regarded International Financial Services Centre with financial services being the backbone of our economy, the Cayman Islands came together with single mindedness to achieve our FATF delisting through the implementation of effective sanctions, beneficial ownership, [and] money laundering prosecutions and convictions.

Mr. Speaker, allow me please to take this opportunity to publicly thank the many people who contributed to this outcome. On behalf of the Government and the people of these Islands, we are grateful for their professionalism, expertise and desire for nation-building.

I also wish to acknowledge once again, the most capable leadership of the Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister of Financial Services; and in this respect, I beg your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, to call his name Hon. André Ebanks, because history should record such a valiant and tremendous attempt on his behalf. Also, that of the Honourable Attorney General, Mr. Samuel Bulgin, in this most critical task.

A key component of our FATF delisting was demonstrating that our beneficial ownership regime met the global standard. Just last month, we strengthened our alignment with the FATF by passing the Beneficial Ownership Transparency Act, 2023.

Again, I wish to thank my colleagues on both sides of this House for their cooperation and indeed their commitment to ensure that this matter of paramount importance was dealt with expeditiously, sending a signal to the entire world that we are united when

it comes to protecting our economy and the maintenance of global standards.

Mr. Speaker, at the heart, the Act will help competent authorities both locally and globally, prevent, detect and prosecute crime whenever it occurs. These two key achievements position our financial services industry for continued success as we move into a bright future. Strong and coordinated efforts of this kind are what are needed to deal with any challenges that may arise in the face of Cayman's continued success, stability and upward trajectory.

A central element to our success story with the financial services has been, telling our story. The Deputy Premier and his team in the Ministry of Financial Services has engaged in face-to-face dialogue with some of the individuals and bodies that have been most critical of the Cayman Islands, often relying on outdated information or even worse, Mr. Speaker, unfounded claims to paint an unfair picture of our industry. This high level of engagement and professionalism demonstrates that firstly, we have nothing to hide and secondly, we are ready for the world stage.

Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they are hearing directly from competent Caymanian professionals who have worked both in the financial services industry and the public sector. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my profound pride in the way that our Honourable Deputy Premier has represented us, not only with FATF, but to the European Commission and the United Kingdom, as well as in the Caribbean region.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: This Ministry's 2024-2025 budget is driven by its objective to achieve a positive assessment on FATF 5th Round review; maintaining market and commercial leading edge in financial, maritime and aviation services; enhancing local intellectual property registration, and streamlining the licensing framework for local businesses.

I also welcome this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for Parliamentary Secretary who hails from the West Bay North constituency to support his Minister in the area of Commerce, which I will allow the Minister to expand during his contribution.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, as mentioned earlier, the Ministry will continue to advocate on behalf of our financial services industry, dispelling untruths and defending our solid record of compliance with global standards, providing our allies and our partners with accurate information so that they too can defend us when in Brussels, Westminster, Whitehall, Washington DC or any of the international media. We will continue to valiantly defend this pillar of our economy.

Please permit me to introduce, Mr. Speaker, some of the key initiatives to be undertaken across Ministries in the upcoming financial year. The respective

Ministers will, of course, elaborate and elucidate during their respective presentations.

Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development

Firstly, the Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development. The Honourable Member for West Bay South and our Honourable Deputy Premier, also carries the responsibility for a second and important Ministry namely, Investment, Innovation and Social Development.

A few of the initiatives to be undertaken for 2024-2025 under this said Ministry include the launch of the e-ID Card Programme for residents of our Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, legislation, a cornerstone of social development efforts, remains a priority. Amendments to the Children Act (2012 Revision) are underway, which will see the establishment of the Office of the Children's Commissioner. Simultaneously, the Ministry will be working on the repeal and replacement of the Adoption of Children Act, and amendments to the Older Persons Act [2017]. These legislative measures will be vital in fortifying the protection and welfare of our most vulnerable in our population.

The Ministry will also be strengthening the work of the Department of Children and Family Services, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub and the Sunrise Adult Training Centre to meet the evolving needs of the clients they serve.

For the subject of Social Development, our Honourable Deputy Premier is assisted by Parliamentary Secretary, the elected Member for Savannah who is known throughout these Islands for her compassion and her care. I think we are all thankful that she gets to continue exactly where she left off.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Speaker, our Honourable Deputy Premier demonstrates that it is possible to focus on the welfare of our people while also remaining focused on the economy. That balance, you see, embodies the spirit of the UPM and I dare say every Member of the Government.

At the end of 2021, due to closing of our borders as a result of the pandemic, our tourism industry like others across the world, suffered tremendously. We were therefore eager to reopen, but we had to do so wisely. Having carefully navigated the critical recovery phase of the pandemic, our economy has emerged stronger.

Ministry of Tourism and Ports

I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker, that as of September this year, the Cayman Islands' tourism showed a steady upward trajectory. Between January and September of 2023, stayover and cruise arrivals to

the Cayman Islands maintained an upward momentum with the destination seeing 105 per cent increase in total visitation compared to the same period in 2022.

Our Islands welcome 323,038 stayover visitors and 930,621 cruise visitors between January and September 2023. This represented 83.6 per cent of the 2019 visitation numbers, far surpassing the destination's target of 70 per cent of our 2019 visitation numbers. Standout months included January with 89 per cent of 2019's visitation, and September which is normally our slowest month, saw 88 per cent increase over 2019.

With Cayman having exceeded its visitation goal of 70 per cent of the 2019 records in the first three quarters, Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Hon. Kenneth Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Ports, the Member for George Town Central, is very confident that we are on track for a full tourism recovery by the end of this year.

Mr. Speaker, permit me please, to again convey my appreciation to the Honourable Minister of Tourism and his diligent team for their continuous efforts in improving this most important pillar of our industry. Again, I want to make it known that the UPM stands behind our tourism industry.

I also want to commend the Honourable Minister not only for his tireless efforts locally, but for his regional leadership as the Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation. He has advocated on behalf of the Cayman Islands and has represented us well on the global stage, showing that we Caymanians can succeed when we are afforded the opportunity. Some may question why our Minister should spend time on efforts that arguably support our competitors. Well, it is because our international engagement and advocacy is like a rising tide which lifts all boats. A strong Caribbean region means more potential visitors for all of our destinations. After all, we are our brothers and sisters' keepers. One could easily argue that the pace of our tourism recovery has been hastened by our Minister's direct involvement with the CTO. Well done, Minister! You continue to enjoy our unequivocal support.

Mr. Speaker, while the Minister will go into further details, I want to mention that some of the Ministry of Tourism and Ports' projects and priorities for 2024-2025 include: construction of a new general aviation terminal, a runway extension at the Owen Roberts International Airport, expansion of Cayman Airways routes, and activities to attract new screen production business in the Islands. The team will also be focused on diversification of the tourism product with a greater emphasis on eco-tourism and expansion into emerging and secondary tourism markets.

Of course, it would be remiss of me to overlook the Parliamentary Secretary assigned to Tourism, my dear friend, the Member for Savannah. There is no one who has championed beautification in these Islands like her. As we open our doors to welcome the world, we will need to ensure that our highways and byways,

our communities and corners, are immaculately kept, hygienic and enhanced.

Mr. Speaker, both the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary show that good old Caymanian way of rejecting uncleanness.

Ministry of Health and Wellness

Mr. Speaker, neither our people nor our economy can thrive without us having a healthy and well society. The UPM Administration is fortunate to have a strong and qualified champion in the form of our Minister for Health and Wellness, my esteemed colleague, the elected Member for Prospect. She is dynamic, energetic and committed to this area. A trained nurse, she has naturally taken [to] her Ministerial responsibilities, never ever shying away from the hot button issues.

Over the next two years, some of the new initiatives by the Ministry of Health and Wellness will include: the development of a national health care strategy, including clinical standards; facilitating the promulgation of a new Public Health Act, and Environmental Health Act and Regulations; to effectively regulate and manage all public health and environmental health functions.

Focus will also be on continuously improving the current solid waste management on the landfills in Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman through investment in necessary staff, replacement of outdated equipment and inadequate infrastructure.

Ministry of Home Affairs

Mr. Speaker, I will use this time to highlight Home Affairs, which is the second Ministry under the Member for Prospect.

During the financial year, the Ministry plans to professionalise public safety services through accountability and development of the employees. It will also focus on youth development programmes that provide career pathways into our uniformed and public safety agencies. For example, moving our young people from the Cadets to the Fire Service or the Coast Guard is modernising government, future proofing and improving the quality of life for our people, all in one.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has taken an intelligence driven approach to justify its largest expenditures such as starting the design of a prison that will meet international standards. They will also be investing in prison offenders' management and rehabilitation reform. Additionally, the Ministry will be upgrading the national CCTV system to collect more specific sets of data to aide in public safety.

Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

Mr. Speaker, I am so honoured to serve in a Cabinet comprising three Caymanian women.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly:

The third woman to join our Cabinet is none other than the former Speaker, Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, the elected Member for West Bay Central who will speak later. Mr. Speaker, even as a first time Parliamentarian, she has demonstrated to this our country, her abilities to wrap her mind around a very complex yet important subject. I am therefore most thankful to her, for not only taking the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, but for also seeking to take responsibility for the Gender Affairs Unit which will be moving to her Ministry. We cannot have a sustainable society without properly addressing gender gaps, gender violence and other key issues.

My colleague, the Honourable Member for West Bay Central has demonstrated a willingness to build on the gains that we made as we seek to cultivate a lasting legacy of sustainability in the Cayman Islands by achieving environmental, social and economic balance, to make the lives of our people and future generations of Caymanians much better.

With its focus on developing programmes to enhance Caymanian sustainability and supporting climate change resilience, the Minister and Ministry will, in the upcoming year, work to complete the 2023-2040 Cayman Islands climate change policy; support the creation of an overarching sustainability framework to guide the work of public entities and further enhance protected areas and the protection of indigenous species.

The Ministry intends to work collaboratively across government agencies for the development and implementation of strategies to create a more sustainable [and] climate resilient future including innovation, biodiversity, food security, green technology and renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, I want now to take a moment to thank the leadership and staff of [the Ministry of] Sustainability and Climate Resiliency for all of the hard work they have undertaken over the past two and a half years. Some of the gains made in the area of environmental sustainability and resiliency are as follows:

- The purchase and protection of significant acreage across the Cayman Islands, including parcels in the Salina Reserve, Sand Cay, Western Mangroves area, Central Mangrove Wetlands in Grand Cayman, Tarpon Lake and the East interior of Little Cayman and Hemmington Forest at Cayman Brac;
- Commenced the Darwin Grant-funded Cayman deep-sea project with partners Marine Conservation International and Beneath the Waves, to better document the Cayman Islands' deep-sea resources at depths between 15 to 200 metres or 165 to 6500 ft.;
- In February, they released the Climate Change Risk Assessment of 2022, Final Evidence

Report for the Cayman Islands, and the most comprehensive review of climate risk ever undertaken in our Islands;

- They launched the Cayman Home Energy Efficiency Retrofits to include some of the National Housing Development Trust's affordable homes; and
- The completion of public consultation meetings for the Draft 2023-2040 Cayman Islands Climate Change Policy.

Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development

Mr. Speaker, for the 2024/2025 Financial Year, the Ministry will develop a comprehensive national development plan, implement the 2022-2037 Cayman Islands Food and National Security Policy, and undertake several key road projects through the National Roads Authority.

Through the NDT (National Housing Development Trust), the Ministry will undertake multiple projects to develop homes throughout the districts on Grand Cayman, while completing a national public and affordable Housing Policy, and a 10-year strategic plan to implement these various initiatives that support a sustainable approach to housing.

In an effort to improve the quality of service that we deliver to the public, organisational reviews will be completed on several of the key departments and agencies within that Ministry.

The National Road Safety campaign will continue, as we make a genuine and coordinated effort to reduce the number of lives lost to traffic fatalities to zero.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to applaud the drive and the passion of the Honourable Member for North Side, Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Transport and Development. He cares deeply and compassionately for the areas that he has been assigned; in particular, his vision and passion for farming food security, demonstrates wisdom far beyond his years and should be a source for optimism and inspiration to all Caymanian farmers. The Minister's willingness to introduce innovation to the industry, and improve farmers' access to the support and services of the department, have all gone a very long way to boosting morale for our local farming community.

I'm also pleased, Mr. Speaker, that he has accepted the support of the Honourable Member for West Bay [West] to serve as his Parliamentary Secretary in all areas of Planning, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport and Development, but not in the area of Agriculture, and he can expound when he elucidates later on.

Ministry of Border Control, Labour and Culture

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure, to welcome back to the Cabinet my friend and colleague, the honourable Member for Bodden Town East, Minister of Border Control, Labour and Culture. He brings with him a wealth of experience and wisdom to our team.

Mr. Speaker, you will likely recall, perhaps with a smile, albeit, the dedication and commitment of this Minister, having spent every day on television with him for almost two months, keeping our country informed and connected through the height of the COVID pandemic. He is also very sensitive and keenly aware to the needs of our people. This trait that he possesses is most admirable, and one which will help to keep us focused on the most important things. He's also very passionate about our Caymanian culture, and is excited to add this subject.

Key initiatives for his Ministry for the upcoming financial year include the continuation of the upgrades to the customs online system and collaboration with enforcement agencies locally and internationally to protect our communities from the importation of firearms and drugs.

In the upcoming year, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry intends to bring legislative changes to the Immigration Reform Act in order to address the many, many outstanding issues. We believe that sensible— might I repeat, Mr. Speaker, sensible— immigration reform is needed. While we accept that foreign labour will be required to maintain our economy, we also *do not* accept that upon their arrival, everyone should be on an automatic pathway to citizenship. These are important, yet sensitive discussions that we must all have as a community. I am therefore pleased, Mr. Speaker, that as the Minister is committed, he will be ably supported by the Honourable Member for West Bay West, who will serve with him as a Parliamentary Secretary.

Mr. Speaker, labour issues remain important, as we must always strive to ensure that we provide pathways for Caymanians to advance in their profession of choice. We should also be fair to our low-paid workers. The final report of the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee has now been duly noted by our Cabinet. I will give the Minister the opportunity, during this debate, to touch on the timeline for this significant matter being taken forward by this Government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight that postal services will fall under this said Ministry, which coincides with the Cayman Islands hosting the Caribbean Postal Union Conference in 2024. However, again, I will allow the Minister to provide further details.

Ministry of Youth, Sports and Heritage

In 2024-2025, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Heritage intends to ensure that facilities are

upgraded and maintained to an international standard; increase awareness of our Caymanian heritage through development of materials, stories, videos and displays of artefacts in more locations throughout our Islands; and they will also promote and support athletes and young people in forums that will ensure their development and the maximisation of opportunities available to them all.

Mr. Speaker, we have all borne witness to Cayman's exceptional regional and international performances in swimming. We all agree that it is now high time for us to invest in a state of the art 50-metre Olympic-size pool and a warm up pool.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Our first competitive pool, sponsored by the Lions Club, was constructed in 1986 and has served us well. Just this week, Cabinet has approved the assignment of Crown Land near the Truman Bodden Sports Complex incorporating the current Lions Pool to be utilised for the development of a new aquatic centre for the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, you, too, share a deep love and a keen interest in the preservation and promotion of Caymanian history. Some amongst us still struggle with our sense of identity, and our desire of a deeper understanding of our past, especially as we navigate new, uncharted paths. That is why we are looking forward to celebrating, for the very first time in two generations, the reinstatement and celebration of Emancipation Day, which will replace Discovery Day as a holiday in May, of next year.

The decision to celebrate the holiday in May is in recognition of Cayman's unique emancipation story; one which sets it apart from the rest of the Caribbean.

While Emancipation came almost one year after it was implemented in the other British Colonies, such was the outrage of the British Governor that Cayman had delayed its implementation, [that] slaves in the Cayman Islands immediately received full emancipation on 5th May 1835 and bypassed (the multi-year) period of apprenticeship which took place across other colonies. So, Mr. Speaker, the slaves in the Cayman Islands were the first to be truly free!

This, along with the incredible story of a strong, intrepid, and unbowed female slave named Long Celia, will be celebrated and highlighted, as we tell our own story to future generations. We will be educating the public more on slavery's impact on our Islands as we approach the first official celebrations in May 2024.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer my sincere appreciation to the Honourable Member for East End, our Minister for Youth, Sports, and Heritage, as well as the former Minister, Mr. Bernie Bush. [The Minister] has embraced his new role with enthusiasm and it continues. They both are deeply connected to our Caymanian Heritage and have throughout his life volunteered with

organisations who work closely with young people to protect our heritage. I am confident in their abilities to see the important work of the Ministry of through, one as Minister, and the other as Parliamentary Secretary (PS).

Mr. Speaker, in the true spirit of sports that is team spirit. The Minister has welcomed, as I said, his predecessor in the role, the honourable Member for West Bay North, to act as his Parliamentary Secretary to support the efforts to complete major sporting, youth and heritage projects which the Parliamentary Secretary started. There is no question about the Parliamentary Secretary's heart and passion for these subjects, so I am confident that, together, the Minister and his PS will make a dynamic duo.

The Office of the Deputy Governor

Mr. Speaker, the top priorities for the Office of the Deputy Governor for the 2024/2025 period are to provide strategic support to establish and operationalise two new key units with important good governance functions.

These will be the Enterprise Risk Management Unit responsible for providing coordination, leadership and support services for effective risk management within the core government, and advice to Statutory Authorities and Government Owned Companies (SAGCs) and a Secure Vetting Unit, responsible for providing security checks, vetting clearances, and continuous monitoring for sensitive roles within core government, uniformed services, and SAGCs.

Mr. Speaker, the Office also intends to continue to provide targeted, effective policy advice and strategic support to the Deputy Governor to help him achieve his goals for effective functioning of our beloved Civil Service including coordination and delivery of the Deputy Governor's and Governor's priority projects related to training for our civil servants.

Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and unwavering commitment of our Honourable Deputy Governor. He is a servant leader who deeply cares for the welfare of his civil servants. Civil servants should know that the UPM Administration values their service, their advice, and their ability to deliver on our commitments. While we set the policies, Mr. Speaker, you would know that the civil service carries out these policies, and so we look forward to them delivering on the policies and priorities in this budget in a true spirit of partnership.

Portfolio of Legal Affairs/ Judicial Administration

Mr. Speaker, this is also much important work that is being done by the Portfolio of Legal Affairs as they draft so many pieces of legislation that we are considering to move this country forward, either by revision

or reform, and they will continue to be led by the Portfolio of Legal Affairs. They have done tremendous work on anti-money-laundering, counter-terrorist financing, proliferation financing and financial sanctions requirements to meet FATF; and, in my humble opinion, they could not be led by anyone better than the Hon. Attorney General.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: We will also continue to support the requests from the judiciary to ensure the important work of the Courts is not, in any way interfered with, delayed or fettered. We are proud of the judiciary, as they are not only renowned within the Caribbean jurisprudence, but internationally as well.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry's team will be focused on developing and implementing government-wide results based on management and accountability framework for assessing the financial and non-financial performance.

Ministry of Education

My passion.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education's focus will be on strengthening the delivery of education at all levels from early education through tertiary level, while developing both curricular and physical facilities.

Technological Advancement in Education

Mr. Speaker, throughout my tenure as the Minister of Education, I have sought to prioritise enhancing technological infrastructure in all of our government schools. This commitment is evident in several initiatives including:

- Providing digital services to all government school students;
- Investing in enhanced network equipment for schools;
- Crafting a national digital learning policy to guide our schools in implementing an effective digital learning strategy; and
- Equipping students with essential computing skills.

In August of 2022, Mr. Speaker, we took another significant step towards this goal by introducing promethean panels to replace the current interactive whiteboards. These advanced panels will significantly enhance the quality of education imparted in our schools. Our ICT team has now successfully installed 314 promethean display panels across our schools, the

first in the Caribbean, and they provide comprehensive training to approximately 275 educators on their effective utilisation.

I'm also pleased to share, Mr. Speaker, that all 15 of our school leaders now have easy access to information on the go through iPads. Additionally, all 13 secondary schools' physical education teachers can now comprehensively evaluate accurate techniques for various athletic activities, and provide pupils with video-based evaluations.

Supporting Caymanian learners

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education is committed to increasing the support to Caymanian students. Our scholarships and grants currently enable 634 students to pursue overseas studies, and over 1,200 to pursue postsecondary TVET and tertiary studies locally. This demonstrates our unwavering commitment to provide equal opportunity to all of our aspiring leaders.

Last December, Mr. Speaker, we introduced the prestigious Government High Schools Scholar Award valued at CI\$100,000 to inspire and recognise excellence among our valued students while highlighting the importance of our government schools. Congratulations are in order to Abigail Rose and Diamond White, both John Grey High School students— yes, that beautiful new high school just up the way— who were the first to receive this distinguished recognition. We look forward to announcing the next high school scholars in January, 2024.

Also notable among our efforts to empower Caymanian learners, Mr. Speaker, has been our introduction of the local Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Grant. This new Programme is designed to equip Caymanians who have already completed their compulsory education, with essential skills and training they need to succeed in the dynamic field of TVET. The grant is valued up to CI\$15,000 per year. It will cover tuition fees, course materials and required equipment for eligible courses lasting 18 months or less, offered by registered, local, private institutions. Mr. Speaker, prospective learners may apply for this grant online at www.moescholarships.gov.ky.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to ensuring that all our Caymanian students have a strong foundation in mathematics. We have developed a numeracy strategy for our government schools, to ensure that every single primary school student has a robust foundation in mathematics before moving on to secondary education.

In addition, we have provided extensive training to school leaders through the National Centre for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics Mastery Pathway, and we have recruited 14 specialists in math for teaching to enhance math instruction in primary schools. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we no longer have general knowledge teachers teaching math, but math

specialists and professionals in our primary school providing the very necessary mathematical foundation to our students.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our strategy to improve the quality of teaching in our schools, the Ministry has also engaged approximately 80 assistant teachers across government primary schools and secondary schools up to Year 9. Our aim is to support our classroom teachers as they apply teaching and learning strategies to help students, particularly those with special educational needs, realise their full potential.

We extend our gratitude to our recruitment team for their diligent efforts to ensure that our schools have the necessary support to provide quality education to all our students. It is our *modus operandi* that no student will be left behind.

Fostering Inclusive Education

Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, we have witnessed a growing number of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) and disabilities; in fact, at the Savannah school, one in every four students are found to have a SEN need, and we are responding to those statistics. In this view, we are working diligently to create a more inclusive education system by providing small-group instruction, as required, so that our most vulnerable students can participate fully in the mainstream education system.

In 2021, we introduced a comprehensive Code of Practice for identifying, assessing, and providing, additional learning support needs in education. Throughout the academic year, we trained and supported all principals (both public and private schools) and Special Education Needs Coordinators in relation to this Code of Practice.

Mr. Speaker, the Additional Learning Support Needs Policy has also been put in place to ensure that our children and young people who have additional learning support needs, which include special educational needs and disabilities, are able to assess appropriate learning opportunities and provisions.

I am pleased to report that 42 students have benefited from these learning support classes at Prospect Primary, John Gray, and Clifton Hunter High Schools.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our ongoing efforts to cultivate a supportive and inclusive learning environment that caters to all learners' needs, we have also repurposed the physical education room at the Sir John A. Cumber Primary School, in the district of West Bay, to create an autism-specific classroom, and a sensory room. This supportive and calming environment caters to the needs of seven critical stage 1 students and those who require a quiet place to de-stress. These specialised facilities aim to better equip students for integration into mainstream classes.

Education Capital Projects

Mr. Speaker, you are no doubt aware that in March this year, we officially opened the doors of the spectacular, long-awaited, purpose-built, new John Gray High School. The school was meticulously designed to foster innovative teaching and methodologies to provide ample opportunities for vocational pathways.

The institution boasts a state-of-the-art performing arts centre, an automotive workshop; specialised labs for clothing and textiles, food and nutrition, and design and construction technology. It stands, Mr. Speaker, as a testament to our commitment to providing every student with the resources and support they need to realise their full potential.

Throughout the year, Mr. Speaker, we advanced several capital projects also aimed at increasing the schools' capacity to accommodate the growing population in their respective communities. As part of these efforts, Mr. Speaker, you would be happy to hear, seeing that it is your constituency and you have advocated for it for some time, that work has now commenced on the new Year 6 block at the Red Bay Primary School, and on converting the existing Year 6 area to reception classes. Additionally, work progressed on the construction of the Theoline McCoy Primary School Hall, and a walking track was established at the Creek and Spot Bay Primary Schools.

As stated in the budget overview, we also have plans for the construction of a new Cayman Brac High School, a new High School in West Bay, a new hall at the Joanna Clarke Primary School in Savannah, and the expansion of the Lighthouse School to include 11 additional teaching spaces. So, you see, we are not just building the Cayman Brac High School.

The Department of Educational Services' Facilities team has implemented several smaller projects to enhance our schools' physical infrastructure. These include the construction of a new wheelchair ramp at Prospect Primary, and the creation of a new student holding area at the Theoline McCoy Primary in Bodden Town.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to providing world-class education to all our students in the Cayman Islands by fostering inclusive learning environments and investing in state-of-the-art facilities. The question is often asked, "who are we developing for?" In order to break those ceilings, we have to do it through education, and after this Minister has exited the stage of politics, no one should ask in their mind who we were developing for. We are building these state-of-the-art facilities for our first-class citizens; not known as ghost Caymanians, but our belongers and Caymanians in these Islands we call home.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: We continue to improve our infrastructure. We are

ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to thrive.

Regarding the issue of a project-based grants [programme], Mr. Speaker, I want to inform honourable Members that this has enabled government schools to embark on specific non-operational projects that directly benefit our students. During the 2022 and 2023 academic year, four schools were awarded funding support for a total of eight projects. These projects included:

- The development of mobile science lab stations;
- Upgrading design and technology equipment;
- Building student benches for breaks and lunch at the Clifton Hunter High School.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the Red Bay Primary School received funding for the development of a reading café and nature garden, as well as outdoor enrichment and learning centres for Reception. East End Primary School, long thought to have been forgotten (not under this Minister), received the support for the installation of security systems and improvement to the audio-visual systems, while Layman E. Scott High School in Cayman Brac received specialised resources for children with special education needs for the first time ever.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry also reinstated funding to all 19 registered independent and assisted schools to the tune of CI \$2 million. The schools used the funds to enhance school facilities, improve student health and safety, provide scholarships to Caymanian students, support staff development, and improve Special Education Needs capabilities.

With this said, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education maintains its vigilance over private institutions. In 2022, three independent institutions were consistently judged as “weak” following their Office of Education Standard inspections, and so the Ministry of Education served them Notices of Improvement to facilitate their progress and to ensure compliance. By virtue of Section 18 of the Education Act, 2016, we also enacted the Ministry and the three schools to receive school improvement support for six months. And I am happy to say, despite naysayers, none of our Government schools have received a “weak” inspection.

Dual Enrolment Programme

We have strengthened our support for the Dual Enrolment Programme through a Memorandum of Understanding with UCCI [University College of the Cayman Islands]. This partnership has led to renovations and refurbishments of the dual enrolment classroom at UCCI, with plans to further expand and accommodate to meet the growing demand.

The Ministry is also currently piloting a TVET Dual Enrolment pathway programme at UCCI, which aims to benefit some 25 promising Caymanian

students. Through this programme, Year 11 students are identified and provided with a comprehensive training module enabling them to acquire an internationally recognised certification in Year 12. This unique initiative equips students with the necessary skills to secure fulfilling careers. Upon completion, students will earn a level 2 diploma from UCCI, their high school diploma and industry certification. The pilot includes courses in computer technician and construction technology.

Child Safeguarding/Positive Behaviour in our Schools

To promote child safety and positive behaviour in our schools which is of utmost importance the Ministry has implemented various initiatives. The online child safeguarding module has been completed by over 2,700 individuals, while the in-person module has been successfully completed by 1,250 participants and 43 educational institutions.

Additionally, the Team Teach Programme, introduced in October of last year, provided training to approximately 300 teaching staff and school security officers on effective behaviour management strategies.

Following extensive consultations, the Education (Amendment) Act was successfully passed by Parliament last year. This pivotal legislation now requires that all schools implement an anti-bullying policy that aligns with our national policy. We have also developed the Anti-Bullying (Schools) Regulations and an update to our national policy. Mr. Speaker, 30 per cent of schools have revised their school policy to align with the new national policy; remaining schools are expected to do so before the end of this year. Earlier this year, we launched an extensive awareness campaign to promote the provision of the Anti-Bullying (Schools) Regulations pertaining to prevention and reporting and responses to bullying. And I wish to thank the Honourable Member for West Bay, Ms. Katherine, for her interest and keen assistance as it related to this specific piece of legislation.

Early Childhood Assistance Programme

The Ministry has also taken significant steps to support early childhood education. The Early Childhood Assistance Programme, otherwise known as ECAP, was extended for summer schools as we found that children were often left unattended while their parents had to work. So, for the first time this year, we provided financial assistance to enable parents for our Early Childhood Centres. Additionally, the Early Childhood Care and Education Unit launched an ECAP online programme to simplify the application process.

To address the lack of early childhood learning facilities in North Side and East End districts, we introduced the Smart Start Early Stimulation Programme. This 30-week programme aimed to provide young

children's readiness for school and support families in creating conducive home environments.

Upon its conclusion, the Ministry opened a nursery, another first in the district of East End—next to the East End primary school—catering to 20 young learners from East End and North Side catchment areas. This facility provides a safe and nurturing environment with morning and after care programmes. As you know, it takes forever and a day until we get that East-West Arterial put in place for those in the East End district and North Side to get to their work and return home. So, we as a Government, have done what good governments are expected to do, fill the gap by providing early morning and after care for North Side and East End's young children.

Members of this honourable House will be pleased to learn that my Ministry has provided significant support for Early Childhood Care and Education Centres through its Early Childhood Care and Education Unit. This includes but is not limited to:

- hosting weekly support sessions with centres that receive “weak” rating on the Office of Education Standards inspections;
- collaboration with the Wellness Centre to train over 100 parents and caregivers as part of the Growing Brain programme;
- partnering with KidsAbility to provide financial support to five parents and their children to attend *‘More than Words’*, the Hanen programme for parents of children with autism or social communication difficulties; and
- providing one-to-one support to 85 per cent of the designated leads for Special Education Needs and Disabilities assigned to the ECCE centres to facilitate clear understanding of the process with the preparation of their administrative files.

Before I conclude with the Ministry of Education, I want to mention a few other programmes that we have expanded and will continue to do so.

This year, the Public Schools Meal Programme has been expanded to include students on alternative placement arrangements and those enrolled in the East End Nursery. This expansion ensures that all of our students have access to the nourishment they need to succeed academically. As the Members of the honourable House are fully aware, the Meal Programme ensures that the entire student body enrolled in compulsory government programmes receive nutritious meals, not once but twice on a daily basis.

The Swim Free Initiative, another exciting public private partnership. This year the Ministry supported private community partners, including the Flowers Group, DMS, Fosters Group, and YMCA Cayman, in the launch of the Swim Free Initiative for our government primary schools.

This programme involves a mobile pool. It travels from school to school, offering free water skills

training to our children from reception to Year 2. The training equips our children with lifesaving skills which ensures their safety in the water. Since starting at the East End primary school, it has now been introduced at the Edna Moyle, the Theoline McCoy and the Joanna Clarke Primary Schools and it continues to move on throughout Grand Cayman.

Finally, we are consistently working to ensure the safety of our students in our care. This term, we introduced an exciting new visitor's sign-in platform at the Lighthouse School, the Prospect Primary, the John Gray and Clifton Hunter High School; Cayman Brac *soon come*. The system enhances school safety and security by efficiently managing and monitoring the entry and exit of visitors.

Visitors sign-in on a digital display kiosk and receive a visitor's badge with their name, photo and visit details. Visitors are required to wear their badges at all times while on our campuses. This additional safety measure will be deployed in all of our schools in the coming weeks to ensure the students' well-being.

I wish to thank my ICT department who worked assiduously to ensure that we saw this programme reach the implementation stage.

The Ministry of Education is on a trajectory of excellence. For 2024/2025, the projects will be focused on school improvement, leadership development, inclusion, early childhood care and education. Some of the upcoming projects and priorities will be to:

- increase our capacity in the public high schools, with the hope to reintroduce ‘A’ levels into the public school system;
- expansion of the TVET curriculum and pathways at UCCI;
- enhancing Caymanian culture and heritage in our schools;
- establishing an early childhood development hub to increase and strengthen early education programmes;
- provision of financial assistance to help working families offset the cost for our day care services. This will include assistance of children from age three to four years to access day care provision throughout the year; and
- inclusion of mental health education programmes to reduce the stigma and to promote educational and emotional well-being among our children.

Additional focus will be on those students who are the most vulnerable with individualised assistance for these students as well as information and assistance for those in need of support in a timely manner.

I would like to thank my team at the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education Services for their unwavering commitment and support; their hard work in nurturing these Islands and future proofing it. Turning now—

[Desk thumping]

Ministry of District Administration and Lands

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly:—turning now to my Ministry of District Administration and Lands.

The Ministry is contributing directly to the broad outcomes to improve the quality of life for Caymanians and to provide solutions to improve the well-being of people so they can achieve their full potential. This is being done through the following initiatives:

Disability Policy Implementation

The Ministry has embarked on creating space and programmes for the learning and development of adults with special needs and disabilities in the Sister Islands. This centre has been completed and recruitment of staff has now commenced. We anticipate a 2024 opening for the senior adult learners in the sister Islands. We are looking forward with great anticipation to this most needed facility for the 10 or 11 senior adults who have been locked away in their homes because of lack of a facility.

East End Affordable Lots Programme

The Ministry is moving into the next phase of the East End subdivision affordable land lots programme. It is anticipated that the distribution of these land lots will occur in 2024. The programme will support the distribution of 41 affordable land lots from the East End subdivision and progress Government's priority to help Caymanians achieve the dream of home ownership.

Improve Beach Accessibility

Improving beach accessibility is the most valuable; it is something that is near and dear to us. It will continue to be our priority. The Ministry included funding for the mobi-mats in the 2022/2023 budget and is seeking to upgrade facilities at many of our public beaches, which will include accessible restrooms, accessible parking and other features within the scope of support from other stakeholder entities.

So, Mr. Speaker, our efforts go beyond merely identifying the public beach, we enhance them as well in order to ensure that they are maintained and more importantly enjoyed by the people for whom it was acquired and should be maintained and protected.

I am pleased to share how the services of the Lands and Survey Department have been significantly contributing to the revenue of these Cayman Islands. The effective operation of booming real estate market as well as contributing to the activities to address sustainability. The Department has significantly

outperformed all metrics amidst increasing service demands. even though with the increase in interest rates and inflation, there was some decline in the real estate activity.

As at 29th November this year, the Lands and Survey Department generated stamp duty and registry fees in excess of CI \$84 million, exceeding our revenue target. The Department which is now celebrating 50 plus years of service to our community continues to contribute directly to several of the Government's broad outcomes.

In order to continue to provide support and efficient service to the growing customer base, the Department has implemented a number of new initiatives. One such project is a new online document retrieval portal which will allow customers the ability to request services, pay online, and receive the relevant service from the Land Registry section. This is expected to be launched early in 2024.

Additionally, we are pleased, extremely pleased to now have a new, spacious, renovated building to house our Sister Islands' Lands and Survey Office situated in The Bight on Cayman Brac. We did a soft opening last week and we will do the proper opening early in January. At that facility we are also housing the new office for the affordable housing as we will see those houses come up like mushrooms, which is my goal. It's been a long time coming but good comes to those who wait.

Other initiatives planned include completing the next phase of the scanning project, creating e-forms for the ease of customers and replacing the programme mapping of all key customer service channels to create added efficiencies. A major development of the Department is the purchase of 12 properties, all of which will be for the benefit of the people of the Cayman Islands. I should also put on notice that it is the deep desire and aspiration of the Government that the people of the Cayman Islands would once again be the owners and the beneficiaries of the Barkers property. We do own a significant part of that property but a significant part is owned by another proprietor in particular; and, if it takes me extending my 18-hour days to the 24-hour days, like Mr. Truman of the law firm, we will do so.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: At the risk of breaching the rules as it relates to anticipation, we will be bringing a resolution in Finance Committee which will go towards projects such as this beach and environmental conservation properties. But I also believe in the art of negotiation and the team has caucus and we will embark on that art of negotiation. I believe that unless you aim big, you should not aim at all; we're aiming at Barkers for the people of Cayman.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: It must be noted that many Government entities and statutory authorities use the data as part of the development and planning process to support their operations and monitor changes to our coastline, particularly the beach areas. For the upcoming year the Department has ambitious plans to amend a number of the lands and survey related legislation to include the Stamp Duty Act, the Registered Land Act, Land Acquisition, the Tenancy Act among many others.

Shifting to **District Administration**. I am delighted to say we have worked collaboratively over the past few years to address and remedy several concerns resulting in positive outcomes for the Sister Islands. We look forward to implementing new programmes and initiatives and enhancing current ones to improve the lives of the people of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. Some of these plans include upgrades and expansion of the District Administration Building which was commenced by my colleague, the honourable Member, MP responsible for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman, the honourable Moses Kirkconnell. We will continue to build piers, public beach facilities, road networks, cemetery space, public parks and sporting facilities.

It is important for members of the public to recognise that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman do not have the same Cayman Islands Government support framework such as the Needs Assessment Unit. In light of this, provision of assistance for home repairs is not handled by my honourable Deputy Premier but it is handled under District Administration and we are desirous for it to so remain. The indigent residents of the Cayman Islands, through District Administration and the Ministry, receive assistance for home repairs through this avenue. The support we provide has been significant to the indigents who need necessary home repairs. We have been able to assist some 50 projects through the Sister Islands Home Repairs Assistance Programme and I am happy to report that the programme has been extended to include the provision of hurricane shutters for the indigent and elderly persons so that we can avoid the mad rush on the impending hurricane or storm for the distribution of Plywood.

Another programme I wish to mention, Mr. Speaker is the Sister Islands Beach and Community Clean-up Programme. One that my colleagues and I wish to extend to Grand Cayman in the upcoming 14 months. It is very near and dear to our hearts as I created it many, many years ago, it was continued by my colleague for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman and now continued by this Government. The programme engages many unemployed Cayman Brac and Little Cayman residents and a few imports from Grand Cayman who are seeking work as well. We take them on board to maintain the beauty and the wonderful, pristine nature of our Sister Islands.

Upon taking the reins of District Administration, I ensure that necessary funding was put in place to

positively engage over 60 Caymanians per year and provide them with a lifeline during this difficult time in their lives. Our plan is to enhance and improve this programme over the upcoming years to innovatively and creatively ensure much greater success.

Public Land Inspectorate

The PLC inspectorate will continue to ensure that beach access, which is very important, is maintained and safeguarded. It will also begin to regulate and permit commercial activity occurring on the designated public lands to ensure its continued safety and proper use.

I'm happy to report that this year the Seven Mile Beach Vendor Policy was approved by Cabinet. We also welcome a new Chairman and vibrant commission members. I want to take a moment to thank the previous Chairman, Mr. Woody DaCosta for his work whilst at the Public Lands Commission.

In the Ministry's effort to improve customer self-service and innovation, the Shoreline Access Interactive Map (IMAP) development was initiated. This will provide an online interactive map built on Google map framework to provide real-time navigation to all public beaches and public shoreline access. Just over 200 registered shoreline access points throughout the Cayman Islands.

It is expected that IMAP will be launched as a pilot test programme in Q1 of 2024. In addition, we have been working with the PLC to finalise approval of the vendors' applications for the Seven Mile Beach. For the 2024/2025 budget new initiatives include procurement and implementation of case management [system], review of ticketing process by the PLA [Public Lands Act] and continued installation of signage across all three Islands.

Water Authority

The board and authority is celebrating 40 plus years of service here in the Cayman community and I would like to pause to congratulate them on this wonderful achievement. They have made extraordinary efforts to extend much needed pipe water on Cayman Brac as well and is well on its way towards the eastern district of Spot Bay. The Authority is now approaching the Creek and has completed through Tibbett's Turn and Watering Place. This indeed is a remarkable milestone. I look forward with eager anticipation to the day when the entire Cayman Brac and Little Cayman will have access to pipe water.

Finally, on this Portfolio I will briefly speak on the Sister Islands Housing and Development. But before doing, permit me also to recognise a former Minister to you, the Hon. Linford Pierson who contributed significantly towards the Water Authority in Cayman Brac and we are eternally grateful, sir.

A business case and architectural works was recently completed with the much-needed upgrade of the subdivision and house plans. We now await required approvals from the relevant department prior to commencement of the final approval application for the affordable homes; we expect to meet early in 2024. The board have been newly appointed and they have been meeting, going through the various applications.

Cabinet Office

Some of the actions that would be processed by the Cabinet Office in the upcoming financial year include coordination and implementation of the Older Persons' Policy, the National Disability Policy, as well as the National Policy on Gender Equity and Equality.

The office will continue to strengthen communication by executing Government's communication plan and strategy. Furthermore, I am supportive of enhancing the work of both Radio Cayman and CIG TV as they are most vital for providing genuine, truthful, transparent, accountable...—shall I continue? — information to our people.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: We also anticipate that as new legislation and initiatives are being proposed, we will enhance and further utilise the public consultation hub which has been successfully rolled out. Also, the work to represent and protect the interests of the Government and the people of the Cayman Islands in the UK will continue to be of significance.

We anticipate that when the UK proceeds with the Overseas Territories Declaration and the new strategy for the Overseas Territories, there will be a cross government and national dialogue on bilateral negotiations. We would want to discuss with the UK- an exercise that would be heavily focused on public engagement. To that extent, we have already extended our hand across to the Opposition which graciously met with us, received the presentation from the Cabinet Office and concurred that it was the way to go. We have extended through the correspondence to the UK, an invitation for them to come to Cayman to initiate these discussions because all Government is local and we believe that that would be a true testament to this new partnership.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands (HMCI) is now a part of our Cabinet Office. It is planning the establishment of flood sensors across the Cayman Islands. This project expands on a collaborative effort with a number of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, Cayman Islands National Weather Service, Department of Environment, Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Lands and Survey Department, National Road Authority and Water Authority.

The HMCI intends to expand this project across all three Islands post pilot phase. HMCI will also be overseeing a risk analysis consultancy for improved understanding of the storm surge and seismic threat, including acquisition of ground speed acceleration data for earthquakes. In partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), HMCI is working on producing a storm surge and wave impact model for the Cayman Islands. Data from this project will inform preparedness and mitigation activities particularly in regards to the positioning and development of our critical infrastructure and emergency shelters.

In the upcoming year, HMCI will be requesting capital budget for feasibility and technical requirements consultancy for an extension of the National Emergency Notification System. This system currently includes radio interrupt and a mobile alert app which provides real-time, location-specific alerts designed to keep the Cayman Islands residents and visitors informed and safe.

Additionally, I have also taken the responsibility for the National Weather Service, which I am sure will be no surprise to those of you who know me. While their new purpose-built facilities near the Lyndhurst Road should be completed during this two-year budget cycle, I also anticipate improving the performance of the Doppler Radar which is of a vital resource in covering the black hole in the western part of the Caribbean.

We are grateful that the Atlantic hurricane season ended a mere few days ago and we have been spared once again. While it was one of the busiest on record, most of the storms veered into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. There were 20 named storms with seven hurricanes coming to life. None of them, praise God, affected the Cayman Islands. This year gave us an even more fulsome reason to celebrate Cayman Thanksgiving.

Mr. Speaker, no one can predict whether we will be able to dodge the bullet next season, but one thing I can confidently say is that we strive to be as prepared as possible. I take this opportunity then to thank the Hazard Management team led by the capable Danielle Coleman for their continued dedication and work.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as Minister for so many important entities. I want to thank the leadership teams, the staff and all of my Ministries for their hard work, dedication and support.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this honourable House, thank you for your indulgence as I presented this morning into the afternoon. I would like to quickly address a few issues that I know remain a concern in our community; the issues relating to safety and traffic.

Safety and Security

The Cayman Islands still remain one of the safest jurisdictions to live and to do business in the region. Although we have seen a spike in crime in recent times, particularly with robberies, I want to assure, in fact, reassure our people that this Government will continue to make it a priority to ensure that everyone remains as safe and secure as possible. Bearing in mind that safety and security is everyone's business.

We have confidence in the leadership of the new commissioner, Mr. Kurt Walton and the brave men and women of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, RCIPS, as they work to address this pressing issue. RCIPS top six strategic priorities over the coming budget cycle will be as follows:

- to prevent and take crime as seriously as possible;
- make our roads safe;
- deliver justice for victims of crime;
- protect the vulnerable and at-risk people;
- improve public confidence in the police; and
- continue to modernise our police service.

Among the key initiatives for 2024/2025 are senior-level professional development training for our officers and police staff at both the commission and non-commissioned ranks, expansion of the digital forensic lab to support data recovery and cyber-crime investigations, introductions of body worn cameras for a Firearms Support Unit, as well as the acquisition of a fit-for-purpose, medium-size multi-mission patrol and response vessel for use between the Sister Islands to address the increase in illicit maritime activity and safety concerns; in particular, the Jamaican drug canoe boats.

During the recent district community meetings across the Islands led by Commissioner Walton and his senior command team, RCIPS heard the key concerns and they intend to act upon them to prevent and tackle crime. The RCIPS plans to continue with the deployment of a task force dedicated to investigating leads and leveraging intelligence to apprehend subjects, patrol high risk areas and maintain its presence on our roads.

There will be a focus more on community policing to help prevent antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood and property crime while at the same time disrupting and investigating serious and organised crime, particularly involving firearms and violent gang-related crime.

To deliver justice for the victims of crime, the RCIPS will provide victims support at every stage of the investigative process, work to reduce reoffending and provide necessary feedback to the victims of crime. Finally, to improve public confidence in the police, RCIPS is strengthening the organisational culture of strong integrity and ethics. They are working to deliver a visible police service, improving through accessibility to the community, particularly through community officers.

Traffic

Another issue that we are actively seeking to address is traffic. It is a challenge that affects all Caymanians and residents alike, particularly those who live in the eastern districts. While my colleague, the Minister responsible for road will speak on infrastructure and transport in a more fulsome manner, I want to mention that the National Roads Authority is well underway in upgrading the road network to provide better connectivity and efficiency for travel especially for daily commute including the highway system such as The East West Arterial. Our Government is committed to the development and completion of these roads and the new upgrades to the Linford Pierson road as well.

The Government is cognisant that roads are an important part of our infrastructure for the efficient commute of our people and delivery of the goods and services that we sell domestically and to the world. As these upgrades take place, they will continue to be sensitive of the environmental impact and also focus on the importance of integrating storm water management systems in the roadwork design.

Highlights of a People-Centred Budget

While I have earlier gone into great detail on the areas of responsibility of myself and my Cabinet Members, the Portfolios and the parliamentary secretaries, I want to briefly outline some of the highlights of our UPM Government. As can be expected of a Government that is putting people first, we have focused our operating expenditure on the areas that most impact our people's well-being and success. Notably in Education, and Health and Wellness and housing and infrastructure, as well as our natural environment.

We will also focus on supporting and growing key industries of financial services and tourism as well as sustainability. Some of the areas we have prioritised the allocation of our operating expenditure include:

- enhancing the budget of the Portfolio of the Civil Service (and great gratitude is extended to Ms. Gloria McField-Nixon for her hard work day in and day out) to ensure that the public service pensioners who work for 10 years or more receive an increase in their minimum pension to 12,000— \$1,250... I wish I could give them 12,000— from \$950 per month.
- Offering property and casualty insurance through CINICO in 2024. This is a diversification that we are seeking to implement through CINICO to introduce greater competition in the market with the vision of reducing the high vehicle and property insurance rates.
- Supporting the operationalisation of the first residential long-term mental health facility in 2024; and
- Ensuring the Ministry of Education's plans to develop and implement a framework for free

tertiary education and local universities for Caymanians.

As our people navigate the increase in living expenses caused by the pandemic, rising oil prices, global conflicts and wars in diverse places, we want to give the assurance that the United People's Movement is heavily interested in investing and providing economic and social programmes to support them. We will:

- continue the free meals programme in all of our public schools to provide parents with the peace of mind that their children are receiving good nutrition, which is the key for enhancing learning;
- implement an affordable residential land lot in East End and on Cayman Brac through the Ministry of District Administration and Lands; and
- continue the construction of affordable homes through the National Housing Development Trust and the Sister Islands affordable homes.

New revenue measures

To fund our intended programmes and achieve our goals of helping our people thrive, the Government requires revenue to fund our expenditure. To meet our projections and adequately fund the important programmes outlined herein, we had to implement new revenue streams.

While it is necessary to increase fees, we all understand that these actions are taken in order to address specific financial demands and to achieve broader economic objectives for the benefit of our people. The revenue generated through these new fees plays a vital role in funding critical public services, healthcare, education and other essential social programmes that contribute to the overall well-being of our society. The decision to introduce new revenue measures was not taken lightly and we have made every effort to ensure the new or increased fees are non-inflationary and do not impact the already high cost of living for the average Caymanian.

The 2024/2025 budget includes measures that will yield an additional revenue of \$52 million in 2024 and \$80 million in 2025. The additional revenue measures primarily relate to:

- new and increased administrative and regulatory fees charged by the General Registry, the Department for International Tax Compliance, the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority and the Department of Commerce and Investment;
- increased immigration application fees;
- custom duties and fees including increase in environmental tax on hybrid and electrical vehicles; increasing the import duty rate and hybrid and electrical vehicles with a value of more than \$70,000; increase customs and procedural fines; increasing the fees for visa

extensions for persons wanting to extend their time here in Cayman (obviously that would not be a Caymanian); and

- increased stamp duty rates payable to properties purchased in “high-end” geographical areas on Grand Cayman.

These new revenue measures will go towards funding our operational expenses. Several capital projects benefitting our people are also planned during this budget period including:

- CIG land ownership for future projects through the Ministry of Lands.
- Major education infrastructure improvements through the Ministry of Education including:
 - the continuing and completion of the work of the John Gray High School, project B and C;
 - phased construction of a multipurpose hall at Theoline McCoy Primary School hall;
 - phased construction of a new Cayman Brac high school;
 - Lighthouse School expansion,
 - phased construction of a new high school in West Bay; and
 - University College of the Cayman Island expansion projects.
- To support buildings and infrastructure for the entities under the remit of Health and Wellness, including a relocation and construction of the Department of Environmental Health’s new facilities on Grand Cayman at a cost of \$2 million; fleet replacement at the Department of Environmental Health at a cost of \$1.7 million; fleet of Mosquito Research and Control Unit aircrafts at a cost of \$2.5 million.
- Under the oversight of the Ministry of Home Affairs to complete the design and pre-construction work of a new prison at a cost of \$3 million over two years.
- Several infrastructure and housing projects under the remit of the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure/Transport and Development including:
 - major road works \$26.5 million over two years,
 - district upgrades including parks, civic centres, ramps/jetties and other development and infrastructural funds, \$10.1 million over two years,
 - building and repairing homes under the oversight of the NHDT [National Housing and Development Trust], \$15 million over two years; and

- consultancy and project management services on the proposed sub-sea cable.
- Landfill remediation under the oversight of the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency at the cost of \$1.4 million.
- Projects under the Ministry of Tourism and Ports:
 - establishment of a tourism attraction facility managed by the National Attraction Authority to include a restaurant, bar entertainment, as well as job training for 200 Caymanian students and a new location of the craft market, \$2 million over two years.

Compliance with the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility

We will continue on the 2024/2025 budget, the Ministry of Finance will continue on the operating and capital expenditure.

The Revenue Measures will yield an additional \$51.9 million in 2024 and \$80 million in 2025 and borrowings of \$150 million over the 2024/2025 financial years the Government will be in full compliance with the Framework of Fiscal Financial Responsibility and the principles for 2024/2025 financial years.

Members of this honourable House, you can clearly see that the 2024/2025 budget has been prepared with our people foremost in our mind. It offers an approach that is filled with hope and optimism for the people of the Cayman Islands and demonstrates the United People's Movement commitment to the responsible management of the public finances. It is also a reflection of our top priorities for the well-being of our people.

As a former educator, my overriding mission is to ensure that all of our people have access to the opportunities that will allow them to develop their full potential and live the life they envision for themselves and their families. As a Cabinet, as a Government, we have collectively done our very best to be strategic, prudent and farsighted in our budget allocations going forward, as that is the only way to ensure that all Caymanians and residents continue to have a good quality of life within our Caymanian shores.

The Government will strategically work to address our inherent vulnerability with appropriate focus on building resilience.

Moving forward

There can be absolutely no denying that the overlapping global crises of the past three years have been the most severe in decades, and their impact has been felt by developed and developing countries alike. In the Cayman Islands, we have weathered the COVID-

19 pandemic. We have experienced the worst global health crisis in our lifetime. We struggle with worldwide supply chain challenges. We dealt with the demand caused by hurricane Grace.

We have navigated and continue to navigate through the cost of living challenges. But, we remain ever so strong and resilient. We are indeed thankful for:

- the removal from the Financial Action Task Force grey list;
- an economic expansion which is expected to continue with a projected growth of 3.1 per cent in 2023 and 2.2 per cent in 2024;
- growth in stayover and cruise ship and arrivals with 105 per cent increase in total visitation compared to the same period in 2022; and
- a reduction in the unemployment rate to the lowest in decades.

These successes that we celebrate belong to every Caymanian and residents who have played their part in the Island's progress. From the valiant efforts of our healthcare workers, our police officers, firefighters, tourism workers, educators, construction workers, private sector community, members of the civil and wider public service; every Caymanian has contributed to our collective success.

Mr. Speaker, as I bring my presentation to a close, please forgive me for taking a moment to reflect on the awesome privilege of standing in this House here today to present this budget on behalf of my elected colleagues. A budget of over 1 billion Cayman Islands dollars. It is certainly worth a pause for us to reflect on the successes here in these beautiful Cayman Islands.

Oh, to think just how far we've come in these beautiful, beloved Isles Cayman. In Michael Craton's landmark work, *"Founded upon the Seas"*, it records that 100 years ago and I quote: *"The Island's budget remained comfortably balanced throughout the 1920s, ranging between £6,000 and £8,000 per year. As a result, official salaries were increased and the plan for compulsory education was finally implemented in 1920. Funds were also found to construct a simple but commodious building as a peace memorial in Georgetown, which served as a courthouse, Assembly room and town hall."*

Of course, that building has been aptly re-named Constitution Hall, given its historical importance, by your good self. But let us consider that important piece of infrastructure that was built some 100 years ago.

Isn't it interesting to see that the more things change, the more they remain the same? A key priority back then was education. It remains the same today. And imagine, they even found a way back then in 1920 to uplift the salaries of public servants at that time; it remains the same today.

None of us alive today bore witness to the debates that would have potentially transpired some 100 years ago when our budget was between £6,000 and £8,000 per year. Yet, we have all benefitted from the foresight and the stewardship of those decision makers who wisely allocated the budget at that time. And so we take on that baton of responsibility very, very seriously.

They made the best of what they had. While it is tempting to think that the sheer scale of this budget gives us greater latitude, it actually gives us greater responsibility. For it has been said “*To whom much is given, much is required*”.

I make this appeal today to all of my colleagues in this honourable House. Let us never forget our solemn oaths and our duties as Members of Parliament to serve as trustees for our people. We have been blessed beyond measure to be able to enjoy a level of prosperity our forefathers and mothers could never have imagined. That means we have to be good stewards of these financial resources and ensure that every penny, every project, every effort or initiative, and yes, every piece of legislation is for the benefit and betterment of the people of the Cayman Islands. Our Caymanian people.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, it should be beneficial to future generations so that our descendants can reap the rewards of our foresight. In the words of the late Reverend Peter Raible:

*“We build on foundations we did not lay,
we warm ourselves by fires we did not light,
we sit in the shades we did not plant,
we drink from wells that we did not dig,
we profit from persons that we did not know.*

This is as it should be.

*Together we are more than any one person
could be.*

Together we can build across generations.

*Together we can renew our hope and faith in
the life that is yet to unfold.*

*Together we can heed the call to a ministry of
care and justice.*

We are ever bound in community.

May it always be so.”

It should be in my considered view, our collective prayer that the Cayman Islands will always be bound in community and served by caring Governments who put our people first. The 2024/2025 budget sets out this said vision for the United People’s Movement. And indeed, it addresses the question as I commence, who are we developing for? And that is, that is our Caymanian people.

There are many diverse needs and yes, they are an increasing amount of wants that will come naturally with a growing and more diverse population. In placing the needs of our people first, we may have to change directions sometimes on our approach. So, let

us proceed knowing that even 100 years ago when our budget was a mere fraction of what is being presented today, we managed those resources well and we did not depend on aide or intervention from the United Kingdom.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O’Connor-Connolly: I say, Mr. Speaker, that to remind us that our hard-fought constitutional autonomy and strong global reputation is because we have demonstrated the ability to effectively manage our domestic affairs, especially from a fiscal, prudent perspective.

It is my intention and that of my Government to ensure that this continues. As we are moving in the right direction—and I do not mean towards lunch—I can sense the audacity of hope amongst our people. I too am optimistic. We are aligned with the words of Matthew 7:24-27 which says: “**A wise man who built his house upon the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.**” And so are we.

The Cayman Islands stand in that solid rock today, Mr. Speaker, with the support of every Member of this honourable Parliament and our Caymanian people and residents alike. We can and we will build on the accomplishments of our past which contributes to a more resilient economy. As well as the foundation of making our Cayman Islands a great, fantastic place to live for everyone who are honoured and privileged to call these three Islands home.

I pray for God’s continued blessings on these beautiful Cayman Islands and seek His guidance as we discuss and debate the budget for 2024/2025.

I want to thank the hardworking and dedicated team of the Parliament for all their work that has gone into making these proceedings run as smoothly as it has and will continue to do.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I especially want to thank the people of Cayman Brac East for entrusting me to be the voice of them for some 28 years to represent them in this honourable House. I consider it a tremendous honour to be a sovereign leader.

May it please you, Mr. Speaker.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier, there can be no doubting your stamina.

I am minded to take the luncheon suspension, but before I do, I have been asked and I have granted permission to the Minister for East End—I can’t remember all of his titles—to allow the East End Primary school students to regale us with some joyful Christmas carols in the lobby. So I would ask Members to proceed there as soon as we can so that we can enjoy the benefit of those young people’s voices.

The House will now suspend for lunch until 2.15 p.m., *en punto*.

Proceedings suspended at 12.56p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 2.16 p.m.

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

FIRST READING

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2024 AND 2025) BILL, 2023

The Speaker: The Bill is deemed to have been read a first time and is set down for a second reading.

SECOND READING

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2024 AND 2025) BILL, 2023

The Speaker: I call on the Honourable Premier to move the Second Reading of the Bill.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Second Reading of a Bill shortly entitled the Appropriation (Financial Years 2024 and 2025) Bill, 2023.

The Speaker: The Bill has been duly moved. Does the Honourable Premier, and Minister of Finance and Economic Development wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Appropriation (Financial Years 2024 and 2025) Bill, 2023.

As we embark on this journey that holds profound significance for the prosperity and wellbeing of our people, let our shared vision for a thriving community and a future filled with opportunities be the compass that guides us in this endeavour. As custodians of our Islands' destiny, Mr. Speaker, let us stand united to lay the foundation of our people's wellbeing. In doing so, we recognise that the path ahead is not just about constructing buildings and roads, it is about building a future where every citizen is empowered, where the wellbeing of one is intertwined with the prosperity of all.

Our commitment extends beyond mere infrastructure. It encompasses the pillars that sustain a vibrant and harmonious society: quality healthcare, accessible education, meaningful employment and a robust social safety net. We understand that true

progress is measured not only in economic indices but in the tangible improvements to the lives of our citizens.

In the realm of health care, Mr. Speaker, we pledge to enhance facilities, increase accessibility and prioritise preventative measures. A healthy population is the cornerstone of a thriving nation, and we are dedicated to ensuring that every citizen receives the care they deserve.

Education also is the key to unlocking individual potential and national progress. We will invest in our educational institutions, providing our youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate in an ever-changing world. By doing so, we are not just concentrating on cement and mortar, but indeed, we are nurturing the architects of our collective future.

Creating stable employment opportunities is another essential pillar of building a foundation for people's wellbeing. We must strive to create an economy that provides decent and dignified work for all, regardless of gender, age or background. This involves nurturing entrepreneurship, attracting investment and supporting industries that promote sustainable growth. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we must ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and social protection measures to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of our workforce.

Recognising the importance of a robust social safety network, we commit to supporting the vulnerable among us. No citizen should face adversity alone, Mr. Speaker, and by reinforcing our social support systems, we strengthen the fabric of our society.

In laying the foundation of our people's wellbeing, we also emphasise the values that define us: generosity, compassion and unity. We celebrate our diversity and embrace the richness it brings to our collective tapestry.

Mr. Speaker, this budget that is being presented here today to the honourable Parliament for the 2024 and 2025 Financial Years, accounts not just for the novel challenges, but also for the possibilities of a prosperous road that lies ahead. The budget represents a government that has unwavering hope, a vision of wellbeing and success for all of our people. This budget invests in education and wellbeing of our children, providing health care and financial assistance to those in need and ensuring the resiliency and protection of these beautiful Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, the Appropriations set out in the Bill now before Parliament, along with the budget documents that I Tabled earlier today, form the Government's 2024/25 budget. The 2024/25 budget aligned with the policies and projections outlined in our Strategic Policy Statement (SPS). As is often the case, the amounts in the budget may vary from those in the SPS; the overall direction and the trend however, remain consistent. The adjustments made to the SPS outcomes and position reflect the enhanced accuracy and currency of the information now at our disposal, serving as a more reliable foundation for these estimates.

Mr. Speaker, before I provide the detail of the 2024-2025 Budget and Government Plans for those years, let me first summarise some of the key fiscal policies and headline figures that are contained in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is in full compliance with the principles of responsible financial management as prescribed by the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) (PMFA). These principles are the same as those specified in the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR), which is also part of the PMFA:

- Core Government is forecast to earn an Operating Revenue of \$1,095 million in 2024 and \$1,137 million in 2025;
- Core Government's Operating Expenses are forecast to be \$1,052 million in 2024 and \$1,083 million in 2025. Financing expenses are forecast to be \$18.4 million in 2024 and \$24.7 million in 2025;
- Core Government Operating Surpluses are forecast to be approximately \$43 million in 2024 and \$53.2 million in 2025;
- Closing Cash Balances are expected to be \$388.7 million at the 31st December, 2024 and \$412.1 million at the 31st December, 2025; and
- Core Government Capital Expenditure and Investments are forecasted to be \$160.5 million in 2024 and \$117.9 million in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the Capital Expenditure and Investments include Equity Investments into Statutory Authorities and Government-owned Companies (SAGCs) totalling \$35.2 million in 2024 and \$24.3 million in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, 2024 and 2025 revenue forecasts include new revenue measures. The decision to implement these new measures was not at all taken lightly and every effort, Mr. Speaker, was made to ensure that there would be non-inflationary and did not have a direct impact on the little man already suffering from the high cost of living.

While the imposition of increased revenue enhancing measures may be viewed as a necessary challenge, it is crucial to understand that these measures are often undertaken to address specific financial demands or to achieve broader economic objectives. The revenue generated through these new measures plays a vital role in funding crucial public services. For example, health care, education and other essential programmes that contribute to the overall wellbeing of our society.

The new revenue measures which I will detail later in my address, Mr. Speaker, is projected to yield an additional \$52 million in 2024 and \$80 million in 2025.

Also, Mr. Speaker, in order to meet all of the Government's planned capital investments over the budget period for 2024 and 2025, it includes borrowing of \$150 million over the two-year budget period.

Operating surpluses for the 2024 and 2025 financial years are insufficient to fund capital expenditures and investment in these years, and as such, we will have to borrow during the two-year budget period. The Plan and Estimates document indicates that even with this proposed level of borrowing, the Government's Debt-to-GDP ratio remains under the 10 per cent level which few countries in the world can match.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to state however, that Government does not borrow to fund its day-to-day operating expenditures, and it will only use the proposed borrowings to fund Capital Expenditure and Investments.

I will provide further details on the borrowings later in my address.

2023 Financial Forecasts

Mr. Speaker, before I provide the details of the 2024-2025 Budget and Government Plan in those years, let me provide a brief update on the current state of the public sector finances and the forecasts to the end of this financial year being the 31st December 2023.

Operating Revenues are forecast to be \$1.04 billion which is some \$56 million higher than estimated in the original 2023 budget. The higher than budgeted Operating Revenues are mainly due to favourable variances in investment, and tourism and property-related revenues.

Mr. Speaker, the Operating and Financing Expenses for Core Government are forecasted to be \$1.011 billion for 2023, which is \$60.6 million greater than the original budget of \$950.4 million.

The major drivers for the increased Operating Expenses are as follows:

- Outputs from non-governmental output suppliers are anticipated to be \$33.7 million higher than originally budgeted primarily due to tertiary medical care at various local and overseas providers for uninsured and underinsured and indigent persons; and this is no surprise, Mr. Speaker;
- Output from Statutory Authorities and Government Companies are projected to be \$20.2 million more than originally budgeted, primarily due to increased utilisation and funding of the Health Services Authority (HSA); and
- Transfer Payments (TPs) are forecasted to be \$25 million more than budget due to an increase in scholarships and [the] financial assistance and pension uplift to our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, personnel costs are trending to be \$35.3 million lower than the budget in 2023, primarily due to delayed recruitment and improved efficiencies in our civil service.

Statutory Authorities and Government Companies are forecast to have a net Operating Surplus of \$1.7 million for the year ending 31st December, 2023,

compared to an original budgeted Operating Deficit of \$19.1 million.

The accumulated results for all of these changes is that Core Government is now forecast to achieve an Operating Surplus of approximately \$22.7 million, which is only \$5.1 million less than originally budgeted in the Operating Surplus of \$27.8 million.

Core Government's Cash Balance at the 31st December this year is forecasted to be \$497.9 million which is \$185.7 million better than the \$312.2 million that was originally budgeted for 2021 when the 2023 budget was prepared. Mr. Speaker, the higher than budgeted cash balances can primarily be attributed to strong favourable variances in investment, tourism and property-related revenue.

Overall, the 2023 projections mean, Mr. Speaker, that Government is forecast to be in full compliance with the Principles of Responsible Financial Management and the FFR:

- Core Government's forecast Operating Surplus is expected to be \$22.7 million;
- Net worth is forecast to be a positive of \$2.1 billion;
- The Debt Service Ratio will be less than 10 per cent of the Core Government's revenue at a projected 8.3 per cent;
- The Net Debt Ratio is forecast to be less than the maximum allowed of 80 per cent of Core Government's Operating Revenue at an estimated 9.3 per cent; and
- Cash Revenues [sic] [Reserves] at the end of this month are forecast to be at 134.3 days of Operating Expenses which is more than the minimum requirement of 90 days.

Economic Forecast

Mr. Speaker, turning now to the economic forecast for the upcoming two-year budget [period].

In 2022, the global economy saw a 3.4 per cent expansion which we believe was driven by improved supply chain conditions and robust pent-up demand from the previous year. This growth followed a 6.3 [per cent] increase in the prior year which occurred amid the post-pandemic restrictions in 2020. Advanced economies experienced 2.7 per cent rise in economic output compared to 5.4 per cent growth observed in the preceding year. Projections indicate that the global economic activity is set to grow by 2.8 per cent in 2023 with an acceleration of 3 per cent in 2024. Over the medium term, Mr. Speaker, the world economy is expected to maintain an average growth of 3.2 per cent between 2025 and 2027.

The local economy will remain robust in 2022, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) expansion of 3.8 per cent. Strong international demand was a key driver for notable expansions in a number of sectors including hotels and restaurants, transportation, and the real

estate sector, despite rising interest rates; with the agriculture sector being the only sector to contract in 2022.

Due to the global uncertainties, Mr. Speaker, such as fuel supply, geopolitical tensions, high interest rates, projections for the domestic economy, we anticipate a 3.1 per cent growth in 2023, decelerating to 2.2 per cent in 2024 and averaging out at 2.5 per cent between 2025 and 2027.

The accommodation sector is projected to expand by 29.9 per cent in 2023 as a result of global consumer demand remaining strong, resulting in Cayman stay over arrivals exceeding 80 per cent of the pre-pandemic levels in the first half of 2023. The sector is projected, Mr. Speaker, to record an average growth of 14.9 per cent per year between 2024 and 2027.

The transportation sector is projected to also expand by 9 per cent in 2023 before moderating an average growth of 3.1 per cent between 2024 and 2027.

Despite inflationary pressures, Mr. Speaker, and tighter monetary policy, the finance and insurance services sector is projected to expand by 1 per cent in 2023 and 1.3 per cent in 2024. This steady performance is supported by stable demand for financial and insurance services and government initiatives such as the implementation of the economic substance regulations. Growth in the sector is expected to average 1.7 per cent over the medium term. Business services which include legal and accounting services is projected to expand by 1.9 per cent in 2023 before growing at an average rate of 2.6 per cent between the years 2024 and 2027.

The wholesale and retail sector is projected to rise by 3.4 per cent in 2023, with an average increase of 1.4 per cent annually between 2024 and 2027. The electricity and water sectors are expanded to 3.7 per cent and to an average of 2.6 per cent annually between 2024 and 2027.

In the construction sector, growth is expected to slow as the cost of funding for mortgages and investments rises, but several large-scale hotel and commercial projects could contribute to a modest expansion of a half a per cent in 2023, averaging 1.9 per cent annually for 2024 and 2027. The real estate sector's growth is also anticipated to moderately increase, with projections of 0.2 per cent in 2023 and 0.8 per cent in 2024, averaging to 2.1 per cent annually between 2025 and 2027.

Mr. Speaker, total employment surged by 22.7 per cent to 56,355 in the Labour Force Survey Fall 2022 [Report]. Despite 18.3 per cent rise in the labour force, the overall unemployment rate decreased by 2.1 per cent in 2022.

Over the medium term, Mr. Speaker, labour demand is anticipated to align with GDP growth, driven by the expansion of accommodation services and other supporting sectors. Government initiatives prioritised integration of Caymanians into the workforce aimed to sustain low unemployment levels. Training and

mentorship programmes for Caymanian youth are also expected to contribute in this retooling effort. With the projected increase, Mr. Speaker, in the labour demand, a generally balanced labour market is expected, with a forecast unemployment rate of 2.5 per cent in 2023, and an average of 2.7 per cent in the remaining four years.

In 2022, despite the rising international demand for financial and accommodation services, the Cayman Islands experienced an increase in total merchandise imports by 17.4 per cent reaching \$1,498.7 million. This resulted in a narrowing of the deficit on the Islands' current account on the Balance of Payments, with a projected deficit balance of \$698.3 million, which is equivalent to 12.2 [per cent] of the GDP.

Looking ahead, Mr. Speaker, projections indicate a current account balance of 13.8 [per cent] of the GDP for 2023 and an average of 14.9 [per cent] between 2024 and 2027. This stability, Mr. Speaker, is attributed to improvements in the tourism sector and increased imports.

Mr. Speaker, the global rise in commodity prices, triggered by Russia's military invasion in Ukraine in 2022, has had significant repercussions to the cost of living here in Cayman. This geopolitical event, coupled with disruptions in trade agreements, escalating tensions between the US and China, led to heightened market uncertainties. In advanced economies, inflation accelerated to 7.3 [per cent] in 2022, with the US experiencing 8 per cent increases in their prices.

Cayman also felt the impact of rising prices with the average consumer price index surging by 9.5 per cent in 2022, a substantial rise from the 3.3 per cent recorded in 2021.

In 2023, Mr. Speaker, the inflation in the Cayman Islands is projected to moderate to 5.2 per cent, with an average inflation rate forecasted to be 2.2 [per cent] annually between 2024 to 2027.

Mr. Speaker, the global economy is facing various risks and uncertainties in the post COVID-19 era. Factors such as pricing pressures and labour market disruptions are challenging economic recovery. Despite these challenges, however, Mr. Speaker, the global economy has shown resilience, with positive growth in economic activity due to sustained demand. However, there are concerns about the impact of supply restrictions by Saudi Arabia and other Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) [members], which have led to higher input costs and shipping charges potentially affecting consumer demand.

Mr. Speaker, any slowdown of course, in international demand for financial and accommodation services could hinder Cayman's projected growth and the strength of their local demand can be tested in the near term. Higher interest rates could limit investments, weigh on mortgage loans, slowdown for residential demand and further increase the cost of living. However, Mr. Speaker, the general consensus seems to be an

expectation of interest rates actually declining in the near-to-medium term.

The 2024 and 2025 Budget

Mr. Speaker, now turning to the details of this said budget.

Operating Revenue is forecasted to be at \$1.09 billion, with \$1.03 billion being coercive revenue, and the balance of \$61.4 million in Sales of Goods and Services, Investment Revenue, Donations and Other Operating Revenue.

In 2025, Operating Revenue is forecasted to be \$1.13 billion with \$1.07 billion in coercive revenue and the balance of \$60.5 million in Sales of Goods and Services, Investment Revenue, Donations and Other Operating Revenue.

Mr. Speaker, the revenue forecasts include new revenue measures that are projected to yield revenues of \$52 million in 2024 and \$80 million in 2025. The revenue measures are primarily related to:

- Administrative and regulatory related fees which are charged by our General Registry, the Department for International Tax Compliance, the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority and the Department of Commerce and Investment;
- Increase to work permit application fees;
- An increase in the import duty rate on hybrid and electric vehicles valuing more than CI\$70,000;
- An increase in environmental tax payable with respect to the said vehicles with a cost, insurance and freight value (CIF) for \$80,000 or more;
- Increase in customs fines and procedural fines;
- Increase in the fees for immigration-related visas and extensions; and
- Finally, Mr. Speaker, an increase to the stamp duty rate is being contemplated for properties purchased in certain high-end, geographical areas on Grand Cayman.

Operating and Financial Expenses for 2024 is forecast to be \$1.05 billion, and \$1.08 billion in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the major cost drivers of the Operating and Financing Expenses are:

1. Personnel costs are budgeted to be \$500.7 million in 2024 and \$522.3 million in 2025, to fund planned recruitment activities for additional mental health staff; enhanced remuneration for educators; enhanced resources for Border Control, increased resources for the promotion and regulation of our financial services industry; and increases in health insurance premiums payable with respect to Civil Servants.
2. Supplies and Consumables are budgeted to be \$175.4 million and \$178 million in 2024 2025 respectively.

3. Depreciation, a favourable topic of mine, is projected to be \$59 million in 2024 and \$59.5 million in 2025, and reflects the increase of the value of Government's assets as various capital projects are completed.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind all Honourable Members and the general public as it relates to depreciation, it is a non-cash expenditure item which recognises the cost of assets through the Operating Statement, in a systematic way, over the expected useful life of the project.

4. Mr. Speaker, another cost driver of the operating expenditure is, of course, Financing Costs. As I mentioned earlier, the 2024 and 2025 budget allows the Government to borrow up to \$27 million in 2024 and a further \$123 million in 2025, for a total of \$150 million over the two financial years.

New borrowing should not be a surprise to this House, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in June 2020, a standby Line of Credit for CI\$330 million or US\$403 million was established. The purpose of the Line of Credit was to provide additional financial resources in the event that such resources were needed, and to mitigate the effects of Government's loss of revenue and increased expenditure related to COVID-19.

Again, Mr. Speaker, during the 2022-2023 budget period, the then government of which I was a part, borrowed \$349 million, and I must say that this was due to the vision of the former Minister of Finance. I wish to pause to congratulate him for his foresight because it has served in a very positive way to our budget and was taken at the right time. It was used to fund capital investment by Core Government and investments into the Statutory Authorities and Government Companies.

Mr. Speaker, of the \$349 million that was borrowed during the 2022 and 2023 budget period, \$243 [million], that is \$123 million in 2022 and a forecasted \$120 [million] for this year was used to fund Government's Capital Expenditure, leaving a projected balance of \$106 million of unused borrowings from the 2022-2023 period, that is available for use in the next two years.

The balance of the projected unused borrowings from 2022 and 2023 of the \$106 million, along with the 2024 and 2025 possible borrowings of the \$150 [million] will be applied to Government's 2024 and 2025 Capital Programme of an aggregate sum of \$278.4 million, that is, \$160.5 million in 2024 and \$117.9 million in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to emphasise that the proposed borrowings of \$150 [million] will only be used to fund Government's Capital Programme over the 2024 and 2025 financial years. It's a good place Mr. Speaker, to pause to say, that when one scrutinises the budget, they would see that \$150 million is not applied

solely for the Cayman Brac School but for the entire Capital Programme for the two years.

Section A and subsection (7) of the Plan and Estimates document, captioned "Debt Management", gives a more detailed analysis of the interaction between Capital Expenditure and borrowings. It also shows, Mr. Speaker, that Government's Debt-to-GDP Ratio remains comfortably under 10 per cent, which is an enviable metric that few countries in the entire world can match.

Over the 2024-2025 budget period, the Government will continue to keenly monitor its cash reserves and cash needs and will only draw down—and I repeat that for emphasis, Mr. Speaker—the Government will only draw down on the loan funds if and when it is absolutely necessary to do so.

As a result, of existing and the new borrowings, the Government is expected to incur financial costs of up to \$18.4 million in 2024, and \$24.7 million and 2025. These expenses cover the interest payments and other financing costs associated with Core Government's portfolio of debt.

If the proposed borrowings of \$150 [million] are actually drawn down, Mr. Speaker, then it's estimated that Government's end-of-year debt balances would be approximately \$430.2 million for 2024 and \$495.1 million for 2025.

Mr. Speaker, Government will continue to honour its obligation to repay our debt by paying approximately \$49.9 million and \$58.1 million in 2024 and 2025 respectively.

5. Outputs from Statutory Authorities and Government-owned Companies or public entities are expected to total \$179.1 million in 2024 and \$186.2 million in 2025. The budget in this category, Mr. Speaker, will be used to fund the following:
 - \$58.9 million in 2024 and \$64.2 million in 2025 to CINICO for the provision of health insurance benefits to civil service pensioners, and qualified seafarers and veterans;
 - \$46.3 million in 2024 and 2025 to HSA for the provision of various medical services to our communities;
 - \$33.8 million in 2024 and \$35.5 million in 2025 to the Cayman Islands Monetary Authority for enhanced regulatory capacity to keep abreast of the ever-changing international regulatory requirements; and
 - \$18.6 million per year for 2024 and 2025 to Cayman Airways Limited and the provision of international airlift to the Cayman Islands from strategic tourism markets and domestic airlift between our three Islands.

6. Outputs from non-governmental output suppliers are expected to be \$43.8 million in 2024 and \$39.1 million in 2025. Mr. Speaker, the major items in this category are:

- \$18.6 million in 2024 and \$14.4 million in 2025 for tertiary medical care at various local and overseas providers for uninsured, underinsured and indigent persons;
- \$11.5 million in 2024 and \$11 million in 2025 for Public School Meals Programme;
- \$2.1 million in 2024 and \$2.9 million in 2025 with respect to Legal Aid Services. These amounts are entirely consistent with budgeted expenditure in the prior years; and
- \$2 million per year in 2024 and 2025 for the care of indigent and disabled elderly persons.

7. Transfer Payments (TPs) are forecasted to be \$66.5 million in 2024 and \$64.3 million in 2025. These funds will be used to deliver critical social programmes that support our young people in achieving their educational goals and provide vital financial support to the most vulnerable in our society. The major Transfer Payments budgeted for 2024 and 2025 are as follows:

- \$23.8 million in 2024 and \$24.3 million in 2025 for local and overseas scholarships to approximately 2,500 students per year to enable them to pursue advanced studies and acquire the skills necessary to build a modern Cayman job market;
- \$15.2 million in 2024 and \$12 million in 2025 for financial assistance to support approximately 1,500 households in our community;
- \$10.9 million in 2024 and \$10.8 million in 2025 for ex-gratia payments to approximately 900 persons in respect of past service provided by our seamen and veterans; and
- \$3.2 million in 2024 and 2025 for youth, sports and heritage programmes.

Collectively, Mr. Speaker, the public entities are forecast to incur [a] Net Deficit of \$1.7 million in 2024 and \$2 million in 2025. Most notably:

- The Cayman Islands Airport Authority is forecasting operating surpluses of \$20.2 million in 2024 and \$21.1 million in 2025;
- Cayman Airways is forecasting operating deficit in 2024 \$13.1 million and \$12.1 million in 2025; and

- The Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited is forecasting an operating deficit of \$9.5 [million] in 2024 and \$10.1 [million] in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, for 2024, when considering the forecasted Operating Revenues of \$1.09 billion and the forecasted Operating and Financing Expenses of \$1.05 billion, Core Government is forecast to earn an Operating Surplus of \$43 million. When factoring in the forecast of \$1.7 million Operating Deficit of public entities, the entire Public Sector is forecasted to have an overall net surplus of \$41.3 million in 2024.

For 2025, Mr. Speaker, when considering the forecast Operating Revenues of \$1.13 billion [and] the Operating and Financing Expenses of \$1.08 billion, Core Government is forecast to earn Operating Surplus of \$53.2 million. When factoring in the forecast \$2 million Operating Deficit of public entities, the entire Public Sector is forecast to have an overall Net Surplus of \$51.2 million for 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the Government intends to make Capital Investments into Ministries, Portfolios and Offices of approximately \$125.3 million in 2024 and \$93.7 million in 2025.

Mr. Speaker, these planned Capital Investments will be funded from borrowings and a small amount from Operating Revenues. The major investments in this category include:

- \$31.9 million in 2024 [and] \$33.9 million in 2025 for the continued expansion of educational facilities including the new school in the Brac, the development of a new high school in West Bay, [and] continued expansion of the new John Gray High School Project B and C;
- \$15.1 million in 2024 and \$13.5 million in 2025 for the expansion, maintenance and improvement of our road network;
- \$11.8 million in 2024 and \$8.6 million in 2025 for the Central Scranton Park, other various park and district upgrades, civic centres and jetties, and infrastructural and other development;
- \$7.4 million in 2024 [and] \$4.2 million in 2025 for the improvement of the prison facilities; and
- \$3.8 million per year in 2024 and 2025 for land acquisition for farming and the conservation, protection and securing of Cayman's natural environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Government also believes in conservation and will be seeking, as I indicated earlier, approval from Finance Committee to allow for the use of \$10 million from the [EPF] Environment Protection Fund for the acquisition of land, including beach property, for conservation purposes.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Government is planning to make capital investments into public entities totalling \$35.2 million in 2024, and a further \$24.2 million in 2025. These investments include:

- \$12.1 million in 2024 and \$9.1 million in 2025 to Cayman Airways to cover debt servicing and operating expenditures;
- \$8 million in 2024 and \$7 million in 2025 to the National Housing Development Trust to cover debt servicing obligation and construction of affordable homes;
- \$8.4 million in 2024 and \$5.3 million in 2025 to Cayman Turtle Conservation and Education Centre Limited, to cover operating expenditure; and
- \$2.1 million in 2024 and \$1.1 million in 2025 to the University College of the Cayman Islands or UCCI to fund operational deficits.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the compliance to the Principles of Responsible Financial Management set out in the Public Management and Finance Act, and the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility, the 2024-2025 budget forecasts the following levels of compliance with the principles:

Net operating results should be positive — Core Government's revenues should be greater than its expenses. For 2024 and 2025, Mr. Speaker, compliance is achieved, as the core government is forecast to record a net operating surplus of \$43 million in 2024 and \$53.2 million in 2025 (it would make any MP want to run in 2025).

Net worth should be positive— Core Government's Assets less its Liabilities should be positive. The Government's Net Worth is forecast to be \$2.2 billion at 31 December 2024 and \$2.2 billion at 31 December, 2025.

Debt servicing— that is, Mr. Speaker, the annual payments of interest and principal related to all public sector borrowing commitments should be no more than 10 per cent of Core Government's revenue. I'm happy to say, that the Core Government is forecast to have a Debt Servicing Ratio of 8.4 per cent in 2024 and 7.8 per cent in 2025.

Net Debt— that is, the total debt of Core Government, plus the weighted average debt balance of public entities less Core Government's liquid assets, should be no more than 80 per cent of Core Government's revenue for the fiscal year. This for sure brings out the teacher in me, and it probably would have resulted in an A-plus because our debt ratio, Mr. Speaker, is forecasted to be a mere 17.5 per cent in 2024 and 19 per cent in 2025 which is well, well, below the maximum of 80 per cent limit.

Cash Reserves— The unrestricted cash reserves (Operating Bank Account and General Reserves) of the Core Government – measured at the lowest point in the fiscal period – should be sufficient to cover 90 days of Core Government's estimated operating expenditures. For 2024, Mr. Speaker, the Government is forecast to have sufficient cash reserves to cover approximately 94.1 days of operating expenditures at its very lowest point during the financial year;

and in 2025, it is forecast to have 104.3 days of cash reserve. Both years, Mr. Speaker, are above the 90-day minimum requirement.

Mr. Speaker, as I conclude, laying the foundation for our people's wellbeing requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses healthcare, education, employment, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and our financial and tourism industries. By investing in these pillars, Mr. Speaker, we can create a society that is healthy, that is prosperous, that is resilient. Let us, therefore, Mr. Speaker, work together, hand in hand, to build a brighter future for all.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the United People's Movement, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Her Excellence the Governor yet once again; Official Members of Cabinet; Parliamentary Secretaries; my Cabinet Ministers, Chief Officers and their staff; for their support, guidance, patience; and commitment in producing the 2024-2025 budget. Special thanks must also be made to the Ministry of Finance in assisting the Government to finalize the 2024-2025 budget.

Mr. Speaker, if I could crave your indulgence to take just a little extra time to say how extremely appreciative I am to the Finance dream-team that has made my life so much easier after, perhaps less than a week, and pulling it together [over] long, long, arduous nights—

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Never complained, never asked for raise of pay; and although I was very actable in giving the \$1500, I am hoping that come next year, with the performance and the fiscal responsibility, that we would have reached where we can give honorariums for performance, so Honourable Deputy Governor (DG)—

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Yes?

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: I put you on notice that I will be recommending the finance team to be first through the gate.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the resilient and enduring people of our beloved Cayman Islands. Special thanks also, to the Members of the Opposition.

I am fully cognisant that their role is to be a loyal Opposition— I've been there before, but because it is the Christmas Season, I am cautiously optimistic that their graciousness will dare not dwell, or enter into, Scrooge territory; but because we all want to get out for Christmas, I anticipate that they will do their usual due diligence, and give the Parliament, the civil servants and the country an early Christmas, meaning post-23rd December. That's wishful thinking, but if you don't ask, you don't get, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, may our efforts today sow the seeds of a future where the well-being of our people, stand as a testament to our shared commitment. After all, our performance will ride on our commitment. Thanks be to Almighty God, for His blessings on our lovely Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I humbly commend the Appropriation (Financial Years 2024 and 2025) Bill, 2023, to this honourable Parliament. I would respectfully ask all honourable Members for their full support of it, and I look forward to their debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier. Madam Clerk.

The Speaker: I call on the Honourable Premier to move the Motion.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that it be resolved that the debate on the Address delivered by Her Excellency, the Governor, Mrs. Jane Owen—

The Speaker: No, Madam Premier; we've done that one. This is, this is your address, the narrative in the Programme is wrong.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Sorry. I was following the programme. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I come from a background where the Bible says that obedience inherits the good of the land. I was merely following the wrong Programme.

The Speaker: I question everything.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: I beg to move, Mr. Speaker, that it be resolved that the Throne Speech, the Policy Statement and the Budget Address be debated simultaneously on Monday, 11th December, 2023.

The Speaker: Madam Premier, I'm sorry to do this to you, but I think we have gone a little ahead of ourselves. What we need at the moment is a Motion for the referral of the debate on your address, which is the Budget Address, which should be in the following terms: be it resolved that the debate on the budget address be deferred until Monday, the 11th December, 2023. The Motion that you just sought to move will follow that.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: This is wrong?

The Speaker: Yes, it's wrong.

MOTION FOR DEFERRAL OF THE DEBATE ON THE BUDGET ADDRESS

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Two minds are better than one; both programmes are wrong. Let's get it right this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move that the debate on the Budget Address be deferred until Monday, 11th December, 2023, and the Appropriation Bill.

Boy, I want to go Cayman Brac today.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: The question is, **BE IT RESOLVED** that the debate on the Budget Address be deferred until Monday, 11th December, 2023.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Motion passed.

MOTION FOR THE THRONE SPEECH, POLICY STATEMENT AND BUDGET ADDRESS TO BE DEBATED SIMULTANEOUSLY

The Speaker: Madam Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that **IT BE RESOLVED** that the Throne Speech, the Policy Statement and the Budget Address be debated simultaneously on Monday, 11th December, 2023.

The Speaker: The question is: **BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT** the debate on the Throne Speech, Policy Statement, Budget Address...

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Mine is wrong now, too. We will get it right, don't panic; I'll start again.

The question is: **BE IT RESOLVED That** the Throne Speech, the Policy Statement and the Budget Address be debated simultaneously on Monday, 11th December, 2023.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Motion passed.

The Speaker: Madam Premier, that brings us to the end of the business on the Order Paper. May I invite you to move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10a.m. on Monday.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10a.m. Monday, 11th December, 2023.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House now be adjourned until Monday, the 11th December, at 10 a.m.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

The House is accordingly adjourned until Monday, 11th December, at 10 a.m.

At 3.13pm the House stood adjourned until 10 a.m., Monday, 11th December, 2023.