



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Meeting of the 2021/2022 Session
Fifth Sitting

Friday
3 December, 2021
(Pages 1-59)

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MP,
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency — “MSCR”
Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister for Finance and Economic Development <i>and</i> Border Control <i>and</i> Labour — “FEDBCL”
Hon. Juliana Y. O’Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	Minister for Education <i>and</i> District Administration <i>and</i> Lands — “EDAL”
Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Minister for Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage — “HAYSCH”
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Minister for Tourism and Transport — “T&T”
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	Minister for Financial Services and Commerce — “FSC” <i>and</i> Investment, Innovation and Social Development — “IISD”
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister for Health and Wellness — “MOH”
Hon. Johany S. “Jay” Ebanks, MP	Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure — “PAHI”

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, QC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Parliamentary Secretary to FSC and EDAL
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to T&T and IISD, Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to HAYSCH and PAHI, Elected Member for East End
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to Housing, Labour, and T&T; Elected Member for Bodden Town East

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
Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman
Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. David C. Wight, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town West

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
SECOND MEETING 2021/22 SESSION
FRIDAY
3 DECEMBER 2021
10:44 AM
Fifth Sitting**

[Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning.

I call on the Member for George Town South to say prayers.

PRAYERS

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Elected Member for George Town South: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and good morning to everyone. Let us pray.

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

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

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

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Proceedings of this honourable Parliament are now resumed.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS
OR AFFIRMATIONS**

The Speaker: None.

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

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
AND OF REPORTS**

The Speaker: None.

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

The Speaker: None.

**STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE
MINISTERS AND MEMBERS
OF CABINET**

The Speaker: I have been notified of the Premier's statement. Honourable Premier.

[Long pause]

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

Cayman Thanksgiving

Mr. Speaker, 11 years ago an innocent child asked her parents what seemed a simple, yet curious question. A question that brought a new tradition to the Cayman Islands. Her query to her parents was: Did the Cayman Islands have a specific day to give thanks for our many blessings?

At the time, she attended an American-based school and was taught about [the] United States Thanksgiving held each November, so her question was simple; why not Cayman?

The answer her father gave her was, “No, we did not.” Then the question became “why not?” She kept asking so much that her parents eventually put together and made some arrangements, gathered local food and on a Sunday had a meal along with extended family, complete with stories of Cayman of old and music in the background.

The discussion, Mr. Speaker, turned to the idea of creating a real Cayman Thanksgiving that included the promotion of our culture and heritage, and so, since 2010, we have celebrated Cayman Thanksgiving on the first Sunday after the end of November, because 30th November is the official close of the Atlantic hurricane season.

I am happy to have been a part of the Government that in 2014, officially recognised the first Sunday in December as our Annual Cayman Thanksgiving. The day is meant for a traditional Caymanian meal surrounded by family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, we have been blessed beyond measure in the Cayman Islands this year. We have had no major hurricanes, and while Tropical Storm Grace left behind much damage to our crops; some damaged and leaking roofs, our lives were spared. To show our thankfulness for a calm hurricane season, may I suggest that people donate their hurricane stocks of food and first aid supplies to someone who needs them, donate them to a food bank, or put them in Christmas collection bins.

The United Kingdom Government has blessed us with free COVID vaccines and test kits this year. You have heard me say many times, *“if you have not yet been vaccinated and are able, please take the shot and if it is time for you to get your booster, go get it.”* And Mr. Speaker, that booster qualification has been changed. I think effective next week, all adults over 18 who have had the two full doses for more than three months, can get the booster shot.

Mr. Speaker, we have been blessed with caring and diligent healthcare workers who have helped guide us through the COVID pandemic. To all of them I personally say: Thank you, and I know my Government, and I am sure all Members of this honourable House, join in saying thank you.

Each of us can give thanks that we woke up to celebrate another glorious day in these beautiful Islands. Whether you worship the Lord on Saturday or Sunday, this weekend is a time for congregations to offer thanks and count your many blessings. It is a good time to teach people from other countries about our traditions, our culture, and our heritage.

I urge everyone this weekend to take a minute or two and look around you—your home; your yard; the beach; the sea; your family and just give thanks. Saying thank you is the simplest form of expressing gratitude and the attitude of gratitude is what keeps us happy. When you express your thankfulness to others, it can make both of you feel better. It provides peace of mind and inner happiness.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I will leave everyone with a quote from Roman statesman, Cicero: **“A thankful heart is not only the greatest virtue but the parent of all the other virtues.”**

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Government, myself and my family, I wish everyone a happy Cayman Thanksgiving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

[Pause]

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I also wish to bring a message in relation to International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Speaker.

Today is International Day of Persons with Disabilities and marks the United Nations’ observance to promote an understanding of, and appreciation for, disability issues. The goal of this day is to also raise awareness that will spark changes that will support the dignity, rights and well-being of all persons with disabilities.

By United Nations estimates, the world’s population today is over seven billion people and more than one billion, or about 15 per cent, live with some form of disability, with 80 per cent of those living in developing countries. Here in the Cayman Islands, Mr. Speaker, the observance of this day is important because it serves as a reminder that we need to continuously strive to increase the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of our political, social, economic and cultural ties.

Mr. Speaker, raising the level of awareness about disability issues is not just about one day of observance; it is about thinking long term, and understanding that disability inclusion is vital to achieving the global sustainable development goals. Whether it is through education; physical and mental health care; building design requirements; creating legislation and policy; or the services and programmes offered to

adults with special needs at Sunrise Centre for the past 35 years, the Government, along with many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), have been actively involved in improving the lives of persons with disabilities in the Cayman Islands for many years.

The PACT-Government is committed to continuing those efforts and, Mr. Speaker, if you allow me to digress for a few seconds, I would make mention of the great job done by Minister Ebanks in his contributions to the budget discussions yesterday, when he outlined very clearly this Government's intentions in relation to the Sunrise Centre; and doing something which serves the interests not only of those people that are utilising the centre, but the whole country, by bringing about a much better result at the end of the day.

However, there is much more work to be done, Mr. Speaker, as there are myriad ways in which we can improve our efforts to make the lives of persons with disabilities better. On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I ask us all to recommit to building an inclusive and just future for everyone who has a disability, so that no one is left behind.

The 2021 theme for this day is **"Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world"**, which I think aptly reflects the climate of the ever evolving pandemic. Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands National Council for Persons with Disabilities supports this theme, and understands how difficult navigating through the new normal of COVID-19 has been, in particular, for persons with disabilities.

Recently the Council decided that one of its areas of focus will be how to communicate more effectively and inclusively with persons with disabilities living in a pandemic environment. Since March 2020, wearing a mask in public places and private settings has become the norm. While the proper mask wearing is an effective public health measure to decrease the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, it also presents a communication barrier for those with hearing impairments and older persons whose hearing is diminished because of age.

Mr. Speaker, the chair of the National Council, Ms. Magda Embury said: **"The Council is advocating for the use and availability of clear masks in businesses, health services and educational institutions. We ask all businesses, institutions or organisations that interact with the public to consider designating at least one front-line person to wear a clear mask to assist those customers or clients who have difficulty communicating."**

"Alternatively, having clear masks available for staff to use when the situation arises would be immensely helpful to those in the community who have hearing impairments and are struggling to stay safe, but still need people to be able to communicate effectively with them."

She further explained that the Council can be contacted for recommendations on types of disposable

and reusable clear masks that members have found to work well, and encouraged businesses to sell clear masks in an effort to help to support persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, she concluded by saying, "the power of receiving clear communications to persons with disabilities and a reassuring smile in many cases cannot be underestimated. The Council looks forward to seeing more persons wearing clear masks in the Cayman Islands in an effort to become more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of persons with disabilities during the pandemic."

Mr. Speaker, I commend the Chair and members of the Cayman Islands National Council for Persons with Disabilities on all the hard work that they do to advocate that our people and citizens with disabilities are treated fairly and with respect. I am proud to say that it was during my Ministerial tenure with the 2013-2014 Government that:

- The Solomon Webster Disability Act was adopted in 2016; and
- The Cayman Islands Disability Policy 2014-2033 was put in place.

The Council serves an important role in relation to these two instruments given that they advise the public and private sector on disability issues, and serve as the principal "watchdog entity" for monitoring the Government's implementation efforts of the policy. I encourage the public and Members of this honourable House to learn more about the Council and its work; you can follow them on Facebook at <https://facebook.com/disabilitycouncilcayman/> or contact them through email at disabilitycouncil@gov.ky.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave us with the words of Margaret Mead: **"If we are to achieve a richer culture, we must weave one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place."** I believe that would be fitting advice for the Cayman Islands, and that to have that implemented, would certainly make the Cayman Islands a wonderful, fitting place.

Mr. Speaker, I would also add that at times we may wear yellow ties to indicate the perspectives of certain Members of the Government and [how] we all support each other; but today the yellow tie is not political at all, but to show [our] support for International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as it has been recommended that yellow be adopted to show such respect and observance, sir.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Continuation of Debate

Appropriation Financial Years 2020-2023 Bill, 2021

The Speaker: Continuation of debate on the budget.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] The Minister of Home Affairs.

Ministry of Home Affairs

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, Minister of Home Affairs, Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, Elected Member for West Bay North: Good morning Mr. Speaker, colleagues.

Fellow Members of the PACT Government, Members of the Opposition and the listening public, I rise to deliver my budget address for the 2020-2023 financial year, for the two Ministries which I am fortunate to be responsible for, namely:

- Home Affairs—which consists of 911, Fire Department, Prison Services, Cadet Corps, the Regiment, [Department of] Community Rehabilitation (DCR); and
- The Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

Mr. Speaker, this budget represents this Government's first two-year budget and my first budget as a Minister. It is with much pride that I am a part of this process. Before I continue, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge and extend my gratitude and appreciation to my Chief Officers, Ms. Teresa Echenique, Mr. Michael Ebanks, and their deputies.

I have found in many cases [that] the whole ministerial team, all the people I have been blessed to work with, their dedication and passion is equal to mine. I really appreciate their support and guidance.

Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I first wish to bring to your attention the subject of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, and for the benefit of the listening public, I would like to highlight that there are two Government Departments and three Statutory Authorities and Government Companies (SAGCs) that fall under the ambit of the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage which include:

- The Department of Sports;
- Youth Services Unit;
- National Gallery of the Cayman Islands;
- The Cayman Islands National Cultural Foundation; and
- The Cayman Islands National Museum.

These subject areas are very unique and important to our beautiful Cayman Islands and it is therefore imperative for our past, our present, and our future that we do not ignore or minimise them, but rather that we embrace and uphold our Ministry's vision of an enriched community and a proud nation.

Despite the fiscal restraints we face as a Government, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is determined to advocate for and ensure we meet my three priorities which are:

- Talent identification and development;
- Enhancing and empowering our youth; and
- Awareness and preservation of culture and heritage.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, many people when they saw talent identification and development, automatically felt that I was talking only about sports—Mr. Speaker, this is across all of my Ministry. The number of young, talented people who are in the arts, who are dabbling in culture; the talent is there. We intend to identify them, grow them and help them grow.

Mr. Speaker, we do realise that all of this work cannot be put in if the right base has not been set in place. I do intend to sit closely with the Minister of Education; to also sell her—which will not be a hard sell, herself being a former athlete—on the importance of the schools being the base of so many of our programmes both in art and in sports; and also to strengthen our culture and our heritage through the schools. It has been neglected far too long.

Mr. Speaker, before getting here I said for a long time—I would say for many years—that Cayman is a graveyard for sports and arts, but I can speak. God has blessed me, the people of West Bay North have blessed me, and the PACT-Government has blessed me by giving me this position, [so] I will do my very best to bring them to the top and make them just as important as any other subject in this Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage aims to achieve these goals through:

- Advocating for and further enhancing current and new programmes;
- Introducing new opportunities for our Caymanians;
- Developing and revising policies and
- Strengthening our subject areas through a collaborative, and holistic approach with those in public and private sector, where there are synergies.

We have already seen some amazing work from our entities and our Caymanian people, and I look forward to so much more as we move into this new calendar and budget year. Through the creativity and forward-thinking of our entities, we heard stories of yesterday [and] have highlighted and brought attention and awareness to our local artists of all ages, through exhibitions.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of artwork that I have seen in the last six months; the level of quality—the photographs, paintings, clay work. All those types of things. Mr. Speaker, there are many of us who do not realise what we have in this country; we have to find ways to highlight these things.

Just the past Saturday evening in Elizabethan Square, Art Nest had an art evening. The number of people that were there... and what impressed me, Mr. Speaker, this was not at the National Gallery or at the museum. It was a private entity doing something out there; and as much as we talk about integration of the new Caymanians and indigenous Caymanians, I saw something happen that night that showed me...

The older Members of the Opposition will remember when the high school was [for] everyone, just like when the Premier, the Deputy Governor and I were there. Everybody was there regardless of what stage of life you were from in Grand Cayman. That parted and now there are two Caymans—whether people want to admit it or not—and my Ministry is making an effort, Mr. Speaker.

You will hear later on about the YES Conference. *What is the YES Conference?* The Youth Empowerment Symposium. Of the two young men who are working with us to organise this, one is a generational Caymanian and the other is a new Caymanian. One comes from the Cayman International School (CIS) in the Camana Bay area, and the other comes from Town. Collaboration [of] two separate sectors.

The other night in Elizabethan Square, Mr. Speaker, once again I saw art do something. There is a lady by the name of Ms. Kelly Reineking; she is a well-known artist and, I am so proud to say, one of my constituents. She had her booth and along came two young girls, Justine Jervis and Leah Grant, to set up their table; and there was Ms. Kelly, helping them with lights [as] I watched.

Later in the evening, [as] I saw Ms. Kelly take a break and go over to two other young Caymanians' booth to look at their work, encourage them and talk to them, I said to myself, *look at this; this is a new Caymanian, and she is there with these three young Caymanian female entrepreneurs/artists, talking to them and helping them. That is what the world of sports, arts, et cetera can do to our culture—mix it and bring us together.*

Through the work that we intend to do, our Ministry hopes to bring this country together as one. We have enjoyed the songs and music of our local musicians and folk singers and celebrated with our young athletes for their accomplishments, as well as supported and funded cultural, sporting, and [other] relevant youth educational programmes and events.

In addition, funding young Caymanians for overseas opportunities in sporting, cultural and youth related pursuits; provision of art classes for greater exposure of our children and teenagers; support of our ageing population through tea and art; implementation

of virtual programmes, just to name a few. Continued services and awareness has been undertaken despite the restrictions resulting from COVID.

While I remember, Mr. Speaker, let me let the country know that last week we had quite a few young people in the first ever Junior Pan-American Games, and some did PRs, and those in sports know what a PR is—it is a Personal Record. To do that in a major competition is something that we must recognise. They got PRs under competition with other children from the best around the world: Two swimming, and one in track and field.

Mr. Speaker, the talent is here; we just have to handle it right. [It is] something that has gone on for years: We see talent come and disappear. Well, God's willing, Mr. Speaker, in the next 3.5 years these young people will be hit with a new system. There is going to be much gnashing of teeth and *come home to Jesus* meetings with associations. I do not mind being unpopular; they can complain to the public all they want, because if they do not do things the right way, Mr. Speaker, there are many ways to skin a cat, and I have many ways. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, I know the rules do not allow me to interfere in an association, but I have facilities they need to use. Things are going to be done the right way, Mr. Speaker. The cronyism and all these things that have gone on for years because you have us over here afraid to stand up. Not me, Mr. Speaker. I do not care if they talk badly about me.

Despite our entities' astonishing achievements to date, our Ministry continues to strive for so much more. The budget for the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage has been prepared with an emphasis on further development in areas where we have identified gaps, and we have no intention of allowing restrictions as a result of the pandemic, to impact our progress. We are going full speed ahead, Mr. Speaker.

You were here once. I remember having to speak at a conference in Jamaica: Restructuring a country's infrastructure for sports. I did not even have to make notes, I just remember what we did—putting courts in every area, et cetera.

I am happy to say, that in speaking with the Opposition about what to include in the budget, we identified that every constituency will have its own, just like you have done in your area. We will have a park or small court in every area by the time this term finishes and if there is one already there, it will be enhanced.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: With that said, I will now speak briefly to some of the specific focus areas and proposed capital projects for the 2020-2023 budget year.

Sports Council

Key initiatives include the review and implementation of the National Sports Policy and the National Youth Policy. To that end, Mr. Speaker, I have set up a Sports Council of eight or nine independent people and we have been fortunate and blessed to have none other than Michael Holding, one of the greatest West Indians of all time, sit on this Council. Such is the calibre of people sitting there, people who have no bias to any one sport or area. It is about sports overall; is the big picture, Mr. Speaker.

This is where we are going and I would like to call out one person, Acting Deputy Chief Officer Mrs. Melissa Whorms—sharp as a tack. *“Minister, if you do this and you get these people do this, this is what could or will happen. You avoid...”* The young lady does not just dot an “I” and cross a “T”, Mr. Speaker; she goes back and she crosses the “I”, and then she dots the “t” too! The advice she gives allows for everything that we do to be transparent and above-board. Things like, how you do become a focus sport? How do you stay a focus sport? It is not just one person making decisions, then going and telling other people this is what, and the facts are not there. Everything there is, will be factual.

Action plan for the National Culture and Heritage Policy and Strategic Plan 2017 to 2026

The development of an action plan for the existing National Culture and Heritage Policy and Strategic Plan 2017 to 2026:

- the enhancement and implementation of services to support the older persons policy where we can tie in cultural and heritage activities as well as ensure [that] our Youth Services unit and Department of Sports are players to this policy;
- the streamlining of the grant process for youth, sports, culture and heritage, to ensure value for money and benefits to our people;
- Enhancing and further support to various annual events such as National Heroes’ Day, Proud of Them Cayman, Pirate’s Week, Red Sky at Night; and lastly
- the supporting advocacy of policies, delivery of programmes and implementation of projects that fall under the entities for which I am responsible.

Purchase Orders

Mr. Speaker, I have gone through some of these. When the purchase orders go out to the various associations that we assist, it will be a completely new purchase order. In Grand Cayman we are not getting money just so, anymore. Money is tight—hard to come by. We have to keep the health services going, and we have to make sure our education system continues to move towards the top.

Mr. Speaker, these associations that in the past have bullied their members, bullied their teams and done everything their way just because; and setting up their elections so that a church group that comes to visit cannot even find the stadium—those of days are over, Mr. Speaker. End these purchase orders.

Like I said, we cannot tell you—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: —how to run your association, we cannot tell you who to elect, but the association will be run right. It will be run by the Constitutions that they present to us. Plain and simple, Mr. Speaker.

It will be all above-board and transparent. There are associations, that from the time Jesus was on Rivera beach with short pants they were doing the same things; now it is 2021 and they are still doing it. Time. The fun is done. I use the phrase that the Deputy Premier likes to use, “The doll baby house is getting mashed up now.”

Mr. Speaker, this is just a glimpse of what the Ministry will continue to do. In addition, I want to mention new proposed projects that we aim to establish and implement for the upcoming budget year.

Youth Empowerment Symposium (“YES”)

As I have mentioned, the Youth Empowerment Symposium called “YES”, has been proposed and the works are in play. It was supposed to happen but with COVID increasing...Because we did so much testing, all of a sudden, we found that COVID was here; but it will take place when things get back under control, Mr. Speaker. And the symposium will not be what we used to do to young people; it will not be in some little hall. The same way we grown-ups can go to hotels and have our conferences, these young people are worth putting their conference in a big hotel as well—showing them that they are valued, and they are just as important as anybody else in this country.

National Treasures Recognition Programme

A recognition programme for our seniors who have reached the blessed age of 90 and above called National Treasures.

Youth Committee

Establish a youth committee to ensure that the voice and views of our upcoming future leaders are heard on all subjects and areas, including programming legislation and policy. There are very bright young people out there who know what they want and what we need. They just need guidance and a voice. We will be giving them that voice, Mr. Speaker.

Reintroducing district and family affairs to sustain the uniqueness of our culture and heritage from district to district; collaborating with schools to refocus the detention programmes, to better engage students in positive and mindful practices; provide an opportunity to learn from role models in their community.

Redirect excessive and negative energies through exercise, meditation, yoga, and arts—and Mr. Speaker, it is so funny that just last week, the Chief Justice called the Governor and some Chief Officers, and they had a meeting about the service clubs and various entities working with many of these young people who get detention or get expelled.

It falls right in line with this, sir, so when Chief Officer Michael Ebanks came back and told me about it, I smiled. It is right here. It is funny; they did not know what we were doing, yet they were starting to discuss it, so the synergies are there, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to say that I know there will be no problems with these programmes, as they are something that the other side of the House will be more than happy for.

Enhance the public's awareness through various social media platforms to share and celebrate our culture and heritage; highlight our youth and sporting initiatives, celebrate our people and feature a comprehensive calendar of events related to our subject areas for sharing of information and activities to keep the public abreast of the many great initiatives happening throughout Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Broad Outcome No. 7 – Utilising Sports to enhance the lives of our people

Mr. Speaker, in addition to what I have already mentioned, I want to specifically refer to one of the PACT-Government's 10 broad policy outcomes namely, **Broad Outcome No. 7 – Utilising Sports to enhance the lives of our people.**

While I am very passionate about all of the subjects in my portfolio, Mr. Speaker, I am sure Members of this honourable House are well aware that I have a life-long love for sports. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak more in depth on the Government's plan for sports, and its related impacts as stated in the 2020-2024 Strategic Policy Statement.

Anywhere in the world we travel to Mr. Speaker, you will notice that sports have long been an arena that provides for the improvement of social capital, promotion of higher educational goals, increased employment opportunities, improved health and wellness, enrichment and fostering of inclusion, contributing to the breakdown of cultural differences, and significantly improving economic value to many communities.

If we shift and hone our focus, we have the opportunity to enhance and turn sports into another area of economic benefits for the Cayman Islands in addition

to promoting sporting activities as an avenue for personal and social development of our young people; cultivating our traditional sport and recreational activities; and [fostering] the overall health and well-being of our ageing population and citizens on a whole.

Mr. Speaker, to fully grasp and understand Broad Outcome No. 7, we must understand the specific actions and objectives needed to achieve it.

The first objective is to promote the benefits of sports by encouraging a culture of fitness in the communities through public education campaigns. This will include the promotion of opportunities for academic advancement through sports, and the development and enhancement of sports tourism.

Mr. Speaker, we are going big down this road. There is so much stuff that we can do. We all know we have [allocated] money in the budget for the 50-metre pool. The facts will show you that CARIFTA swimming is more beneficial to tourism than many other sports—let us get that straight.

[Desk thumping]

World Open Water Swim project

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: When I was in charge of Pirate's Week, we almost pulled off the World Open Water Swim here with the International Swimming Federation (FINA); and just as we thought we had it, something happened on that side of the ocean.

Everyone knows about the Flowers' Sea Swim, but Mr. Frank Flowers Senior and I are working to bring the World Open Water Swim to the Cayman Islands. When it was inspected, Cayman had the perfect record; the water, et cetera, was perfect. If the weather is bad on the outside, we can go inside to the North Sound. Everything is there for backup plans and so forth.

World Spearfishing Competition

Mr. Speaker, there is something that we may not know: We have a Caymanian, Cameron Kirkconnell, who is so good at spearfishing that he has gloves named after him.

Mr. Speaker, World Spearfishing Competition. We have the 12-Mile Bank, and speaking to the Minister of Education, [she is] more than happy for me to take one leg of it to the Brac and one leg to Little Cayman. A three-day event, where people from all over the world would come here for a spearfishing competition.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yes, we have our rules in place; but we can waive those for one to three days—and not everybody is doing it. This is serious competition.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: All that is simple.

Mr. Speaker, this is where sports-tourism comes in. What I see people do when they go out into the 12-Mile Bank—and you can go out there and see them...

When I was educated on this, first by Dion Brandon and then speaking to people overseas about these types of events, these guys actually go overboard and spread blood. [It is] something you are told not to do, but that is the level of Spearfishing; and it is followed on big television.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: I was worried about the sharks too, Ms. Julie, but that is what they do.

[Laughter]

World's Strongest Man Competition

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, we just finished doing a Request for Proposal (RFP) on the World's Strongest Man Competition. Over 400 million viewers in over 69 countries on big television.

Mr. Speaker, once again: Cayman Brac, Little Cayman, Grand Cayman. We have one set of lifting the heavy stuff down at Public Beach; one set at Pedro Castle; one set in Cayman Brac; one set in Little Cayman—different events in different places. It is something that we do not have to pay for, and all these major [events] are on ESPN, NBC and CBS. The RFP is being done, and hopefully we will look at a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in the New Year.

National Sports Council

The second objective is to raise the profile of sports in the Cayman Islands. We must establish a governance structure and improve standards through accountability, by establishing a National Sports Council, which I am almost done with, Mr. Speaker.

The third objective speaks to facilitating healthy competition to improve performance. This can be achieved by a common level one—levelled by supporting more competitions in school and inter-island, promoting gender equality in sports; encouraging Caymanian and non-Caymanian integration. Increasing regional competition engagement and establishing district-level programmes for our juniors and seniors.

Mr. Speaker, this is what I was just talking about: each constituency having some little court because West Bay North says, *we are going to take twelve people, 55 and older, and go to George Town South one day to have a little competition*, and then we just continue to have competitions; and for the younger ones, Mr. Speaker, competition is how people improve. That is why when you continue to play here, you do not improve; you have to go and play against people who are better.

The fourth objective, Mr. Speaker, is to support growth through funding. This will be difficult, but we will find a way; and, I now have public partners that are willing to work with me. We will provide funding for holistic—which includes physical, emotional and social—sports development, and funding to augment sports scholarships which I already started and will continue to do.

At the policy level, we will mandate that all sporting organisations seeking funds from Government have vibrant and established youth programmes to allow for development and exposure at the local, regional and international levels. Like I said, *we will insist* on associations being transparent in everything they do.

Infrastructure development is an integral aspect of elevating sports at the national level, as well as fully harnessing sport tourism opportunities, therefore our fifth and last objective focuses on enhancing these existing facilities for optimum results, which I will expand on as I move on to speak about my Ministry's capital projects.

I understand that this is no small task for a rather small Ministry, Mr. Speaker, especially in a time of a tight budget; however, if you know me and the amazing team that I have supporting me, then you will know that we will achieve this and more, for the people of the Cayman Islands. We will not give up, Mr. Speaker. We will get it done.

Something else that will be done through the Ministry, Mr. Speaker: Our sporting organisations are going to bid for regional and world conferences to be held in the Cayman Islands; because many times, when you have these conferences the international body assists you, it does not necessarily have to cost us very much, but getting the people here and making them see the place... The return rate for this island is pretty good—our tourism product is one of the best in the world.

Capital funding and Olympic-sized pool

Finally, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to capital funding: Over \$2.25 million have been requested for Equity Investments in 2022 and 2023, to assist in enhancing our community centres and providing necessary upgrades to our sports facilities throughout the districts.

Additionally, funding has been put forward to accommodate a new Olympic-sized pool at the Truman Bodden Complex, [which] is long overdue.

Just [with] the results we got two days ago, where we have a brother and sister [Jordan and Jillian Crooks] both setting new records in 100m, butterfly, and backstroke, people in the Caribbean are saying that Cayman's swimming is about to blow up. We have to put things in place; when we have a young woman swimming better time at the age of 15, than the world

champions were swimming at the age of 17, we have to invest, Mr. Speaker. We have to invest.

[Desk thumping]

Five-a-Side Court

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, there is also the Five-a-Side Court that was built by Scholars' International in West Bay. It was a hub of activity, and many good young people who are holding good jobs keep talking about it.

Mr. Speaker, let me say thanks to a few people. Before becoming Minister, Mr. Dalton Watler, Mr. [Colin] Lumsden at Public Works, Mr. Ian Pairaudeau at McAlpine all helped me get the plans together. The concrete companies said that they would donate blocks, and people like Cliff Smith and other block layers in West Bay said they would come and do the work. It is the public and private sector doing something.

Mr. Speaker, that long, long, missed Five-a-Side court is going to be back in West Bay at the end of the Ed Bush field. Scholars have been asking for their money back, because they spent money on it and they have not gotten it in the last 12 years. I will look into refunding Scholars some of their money [from] when it was totally ripped apart—right across from Heritage Park; but a new Five-a-Side Court is going up, Mr. Speaker, and it is going to be one of the best in the country.

Shared usage storage facilities

There are various and necessary capital works projects proposed for our SAGCs, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the general upkeep, preservation and enhancement of our historic structures, like Miss Lassie's Centre and the National Museum, funds are also being allocated to ensure the safety of our treasured artefacts and to protect them in the event of natural disasters; a special facility is therefore being proposed to allow for shared usage of all three SAGCs.

Mr. Speaker, does this country know how much we have invested in our art and all of our cultural and heritage items are just sitting there and we have no proper place to store them. In fact, one of the sites on Smith Road where we have some of these, floods every time it rains—every time.

We need to get a proper facility that can store these items; protect them from hurricanes, fire, and so forth. We cannot spend money, invest in our culture and heritage, and then put it down [so] that mildew and such can affect it. Mr. Speaker, it has to be done; we cannot kick the ball down the road much longer.

Mr. Speaker, if you have been to the National Gallery, you will appreciate not only the astonishing art inside, but the beautiful grounds on the outside that allows for hosting events, leisure activities, and even yoga.

As a result, we will be supporting the installation of an irrigation system, to further enhance the scenery and the setting; and road works, to bridge the route between the Cayman National Cultural Foundation and the National Gallery, both for the public's ease of access and greater collaboration opportunities.

As previously stated, Mr. Speaker, this is only an overview and I am very mindful of the numerous projects and programmes being proposed; however, I am equally aware and mindful of the benefits that this will have on the people of our country.

We see the synergies in our subject areas clearly, and our efforts will be reaching all ages, needs, talents, and genders; playing an integral part of daily life, allowing us to achieve our purpose of preserving our past and strengthening our future. Let me repeat that, Mr. Speaker: "Preserving our past." What we have is what our forefathers did, preserve our past; and we want to strengthen our future—we must make our young people know we have a lot to be proud of. Like the Governor once said to me at the Harquail, *you all have a lot to be proud of.*

Mr. Speaker, through these efforts, we will be able to provide numerous opportunities by ultimately helping our people realise their potential in areas they may have otherwise never considered.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yes; Mr. Speaker, I also have to remind the country that the upgrades for the Donovan Rankine Field [East End], including bathrooms, et cetera, are in the budget.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, we are working in conjunction with many people. A perfect example: We are bringing back the air show. Next year is the Queen's Jubilee Celebration.

Mr. Speaker, the Easter Regatta. We all remember the Easter Regatta; what it was on that Seven Mile Beach. The sailboats will sail; the speedboats will organise races; and I hear that the jet skis—I have not found out yet if they are the same as the Water Sports Association—will put on races as well. All of this will be done out there; as it used to be when it was a big thing to go out on the beach.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, I just looked behind [me] and saw the Caymanian Compass and it looks like the Planning of the past has not given us much beach to carry a baby to sit down on; but anyhow...

Mr. Speaker, we are trying to bring us together; trying to highlight all of the talent [that] we have. We must promote and assist them. In talking to the various artists, they say, *thanks for coming and talking to us; thanks for listening to us; this is what we wanted, someone to hear our concerns.* The Ministry is listening; we

hear, and I am so proud, Mr. Speaker, that when I have taken something to Caucus we have a Caucus that seems to care, that seems to genuinely want to see our culture and our heritage highlighted.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, I could talk on those four [subjects] all day, but I have another Ministry, Home Affairs.

Home Affairs

Sadly, none of these bring in any money to the country—but they keep us safe.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure you and this honourable House that having ministerial responsibility for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage is enough to fill any Caymanian's heart with the deepest sense of national pride that anyone could imagine. In fact, that is the humbling experience which I am currently living and so, Mr. Speaker, you can appreciate why I consider myself doubly blessed to also serve the people of these Islands as Minister of Home Affairs.

Even though there is one Department that keeps me up at night, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier very often for seeing it in me to give me this Ministry as well. For you see, it invokes in me the very same sense of national pride each time I reflect and appreciate that the road to prosperity under this administration is in fact paved with a combination of policy, investment and innovation; and undeniably, two fundamental ingredients in the hot mix are security and public safety.

I now wish to focus my attention on the area of Home Affairs. The value of the Ministry, Mr. Speaker, cannot be overstated.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has responsibility for key Departments that provide for public safety, national security and well-being of the community through effective emergency communications; the Detention and Rehabilitation of Offenders; Fire and Rescue Services; Provision of Disaster Response and Humanitarian Relief, and Development of Youth Leaders through a disciplined military structure linked to our uniformed services. The Departments administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs are as follows:

- The Department of Public Safety and Communication—that is 911, the CCTVs, et cetera;
- The Cayman Islands Fire Service;
- Cayman Islands Prison Service;
- Department of Community Rehabilitation;
- Cayman Islands Regiment; and
- The Cayman Islands Cadet Corps.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the initial decisions taken by this PACT-Government, the Ministry of Home Affairs was established as a separate Ministry. This

was absolutely the right move, as it will allow for a renewed sense of focus and alignment specific to matters of security and public safety.

The Ministry itself deals primarily with policy development, research, and advice, as well as issues coordination, strategic development, project management and programme delivery. Of course, as you might expect, the sustained key risk to the Ministry is the prevalence of COVID-19 and its transmission across our communities. This pandemic represents a significant threat to our essential services with potential to disrupt our emergency response capability. As one would imagine, this has incredible implications for our security and public safety.

In tandem with the wider public service, the Ministry of Home Affairs is continuing to implement robust and dynamic operational responses, including the introduction of lateral flow tests, Public Health reporting protocols and Human Resources (HR) policies such as remote working to reduce face to face interaction in our workplaces.

Unfortunately, our firefighters cannot take someone out of a fire remotely; the Prison cannot keep our prisoners safe remotely. This has to be hands on—somebody has to do it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the work that our Regiment has done in their short time... Evacuate flood victims—they have become very useful in a short time, and I will say this: I am happy to see that they have taken some of the load, because the Fire Service used to do much and no one ever gave them recognition; no one ever gave the Fire Service their due, but they did a lot of what the Regiment is doing. The challenges are real, not only [for] us. There are other frontline workers, [such as] Border Control. They have front line problems just like we do. You cannot do that stuff remotely.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has remained closely involved in the work of the National Emergency Operation Centre, the Programme Board and other aspects related to the continuity of national security operations, and they could not have given me a better Chief Officer for this Ministry, than Mr. Michael Ebanks. Calm—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Always on even keel. Never up, never down; and even I did not realise how deep this Ministry is, until I got there. It is accepted that we are in challenging times; the important thing to recognise, however, is that we are all in this pandemic crisis together.

Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic presents unprecedented difficulties for governments all around the world, as well as their people. For entities such as Home Affairs, whose work is essential to the public, these challenges are heightened and compounded professionally and personally. The implications for how lifesaving work can be conducted in an

operationally safe manner, and the impact that the additional stressors can have on staff, is vital to consider.

Mr. Speaker, it is not lost on me at all that the pandemic has inspired new ways of working, but also increased the cost of business; and worse yet, has continued to negatively impact the mental health of our people on the front lines—people have no idea what some of our staff is going through mentally. Mr.

Speaker, I can safely say [that] before the last general election, my attention was in no way focused on matters of public safety—with the exception of the fire service which, as you all know, has always been my baby; something I have cried about [because,] working at Air Traffic Control in the past, I knew the importance of the Fire Service.

People do not realise that planes cannot land in this country if the airport [does not comply] with Fire Service [Regulations]. They must have a certain number of vehicles and staff; and the vehicles must have certain capabilities, or certain planes cannot land. People do not realise the importance of [our] firefighters, Mr. Speaker.

[After] Hurricane Ivan, people told me how the fire truck came through [high] water to pull them off of their roof; and they said to me, *how can the fire truck run with water almost up to its door?* I have yet to ask the engineers about that as well, but that is how good they were. They saved many peoples' lives, Mr. Speaker, and I am so happy that this year's Heroes' Day is about the uniformed services; hopefully my firemen, our firefighters, will be given the due respect that is long overdue.

Department of Public Safety and Communication

Mr. Speaker, like I said, before this election, I was not paying much attention to emergency preparedness or national security as it is now. However, in only a few short months I have had the privilege of truly appreciating more than ever what it really means to be on the front lines of offender supervision, intelligence-led security, multi-agency criminal justice management and national security crisis mitigation.

I am on the front line—it is so deep.

Mr. Speaker, all across the Ministry of Home Affairs, I have witnessed men and women courageously stepping forward on a daily basis to surmount challenges that literally involved life or death actions, decisions and outcomes. Individuals and teams who thrive, despite significant line-of-duty risks, exposure to trauma, and the resulting mental health stressors. For this reason, I do not ever wish to understate the personal sacrifices made by those who serve on the front line delivering the Government's policies, especially those involved in our security and public safety services of Home Affairs. They are important, and I ask the country: in these high times, pray for their guidance and

their protection. Their combination of sacrifice, competence and innovation ensures that everyone across our three Islands has access to a diverse range of criminal justice and public safety services.

I am compelled, therefore, to express just how truly proud I am of those same unsung heroes, for their commitment to providing empathetic and compassionate help to a wide range of the vulnerable population. When I say vulnerable population, Mr. Speaker, I am referring, for example, to persons who are serving a prison sentence and contemplating their reintegration into mainstream society, but who will require us to take a joined approach that is evidence-based and trauma informed.

I am also referring to the vulnerabilities of those who are being supervised on a probation order of the court, but who will require us to promote a whole-society response to rehabilitation and early intervention solutions in partnership with civil society and service clubs—and, Mr. Speaker, it is time for the banks in this country to step up! When someone goes to prison they have worked and have a “bank account” in there; they come out, they are starting their life... They cannot even open a bank account, Mr. Speaker.

What has happened, just to show you that it is a cycle: Some of them have said to me, *I gave somebody on the outside my money to hold and when I came out, they had spent it; I had a fight and ended up back in Northward again.* And when you talk to some of the banks, “*Oh, it is CIMA.*” Nope! It is not (Cayman Islands Monetary Authority) CIMA, Mr. Speaker.

Now, if someone is imprisoned for money laundering, yes—but if a person goes in for a little spliff or stabbing somebody or something like that, it has nothing to do with money—there is no reason why that person cannot open an account. It has nothing to do with money, but it is these banks. There is always something in place to hold Caymanians back.

It has to stop. Mr. Speaker, it has to stop.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: You do the crime, now you do your time. You realise you made your mistakes and you do not want to go back, and you want to start your life. They got a police record, we do not want to give them a job; we rather put somebody on a work permit that we do not know what they did before they came here—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Yet, we cannot give our own a break—and to my people, to *our* people, I have to say: You all have to step up and do your part. We can talk all we want but if you do not do your part... When we put things in place, then you do your piece for us too! It is a three-way. All of us have to do it together.

If those examples do not resonate then perhaps I would invite those listening, Mr. Speaker, to recall the sense of vulnerability they experienced when suddenly and unexpectedly they needed the immediate help of the Police or Fire Department or any of the emergency first responder agencies. Think back when you had to call the police because something happened. Somebody was threatening you or threatening your family or when you had a fire or something.

Mr. Speaker, I implore us to not take for granted in those moments of desperation when we needed to be rescued or protected. We instinctively dial those three famous numbers: 9-1-1; and knew that help was there only moments away. Again though, to keep it that way, we will be required to adequately invest in the technology that supports a secure, functional, and reliable public safety communications platform. I am very happy to say that the new generation [equipment] is being installed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: The Acting Deputy Chief-Of-ficer, Julian Lewis who was just Director of 911. They have 911; it is one of those Departments we do not have to look over too much.

Things are running there. The capabilities for the future... because in this technology [environment] you just cannot think for three or four years, Mr. Speaker. You have to think 10 or 12 years, because technology is always moving. Everything must be able to interface. 911 has to interface with the police; it has to interface with the fire truck, everything has to link somehow, Mr. Speaker, and that is the technology that is going in there to protect us and keep us safe.

Mr. Speaker, I am specifically drawing your attention to a matter that is important because resilience is at the heart of this Ministry, as will be evident throughout my later remarks, when I speak directly to each department's operational horizons for the next two years. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, resilience is the central objective of our strategies, solutions, and services.

When I say resilience, I am referring to the ability of our country to recover from a national shock and to withstand disaster and significant adversity. Our resilience therefore, describes the buffer capacity of the country to absorb and positively respond to different forms of shock, be it related to criminal justice, disaster management, border security, public health or unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, most days it feels like the Ministry's Portfolio is comprised of equal parts exhilaration and exhaustion, because the issues before us in the security and public safety space are complex and ever-evolving. The backdrop is comprised of various threats on one hand, but countless opportunities on the other. I am finding that this Ministry is like an octopus in that,

by necessity, it has its tentacles into what seems like every aspect of government business.

For example, our fire trucks. We have some that are now outdated because Planning [Department] approved these tall buildings, and our ladder trucks were only designed for three and four floors; so, all of a sudden, the fire trucks have to be different, because we have to meet a 10-storey building and here we go again. It affects fire, so it affects our budget.

We recognise the intersection of security and public safety with things like education, youth development, employment, public health, sustainable development, tourism, air travel and environmental health, just to name a few, so above all Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Home Affairs prides itself on being a valuable partner for everyone. We must not lose sight of the fact that we have before us opportunities to change peoples' lives and their livelihoods in the most profound and positive ways.

Mr. Speaker, the value proposition for the Ministry of Home Affairs as reflected in the budget is therefore: *"The achievement of outcomes intended to deliver resilience in ways that support the achievement of wider government objectives related to jobs, sustainable development, the wellbeing of Caymanians and overall prosperity of our people."*

Mr. Speaker, I want to take time now to thank the Deputy Governor and the Financial Secretary for helping our staff—especially in this Ministry.

At no time, Mr. Speaker, do we want to compromise security or safety. It was easy to add school lunches for our children, and say "No" to bringing guns and bullets for our regiment; but there were other aspects that we had to go into. To look at what we could cut, what we should not cut; and the Deputy Premier and the Financial Secretary sat in many meetings with us and showed us: *if you do it this way, then next year you can do this*, so I would like to say a special thanks to the Deputy Premier and the Financial Secretary, for their guidance, patience and help.

They did me so badly, Mr. Speaker, I even stabbed myself. I even drew blood to try and get something out of them, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: As we quickly established already, there is a diverse range of cross-cutting interest areas for the Ministry of Home Affairs, not least of which include things like modernising national critical infrastructure such as our prison. Mr. Speaker that is another thing: Hopefully before this term is over, that word *prison* will disappear. It will be called the Reform Centre, Correction Centre; something other than "prison".

Building safety into our fire stations and fleet, as well as advancing the reliability of our national public safety communications network, which serves as an

essential lifeline for officers in all our home affairs departments and so many others across the public service.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure we can agree that a cornerstone, perhaps even a prerequisite of a thriving economy, is safety and security coupled with the rule of law and due process so is it not fair to say, that security involves commerce? Does it not encourage consumers to engage in our marketplace? “Yes” is the answer to those questions, and so it is also fair to say, that security and safety builds confidence amongst investors, importers, small business owners and larger employers alike.

I should make it clear, though, Mr. Speaker, that in leveraging the full suite of our safety and security capabilities to achieve our strategic goals, we will not compromise when it comes to providing Caymanians with confidence that their individual rights, freedoms, and circumstances will be fully respected and protected. This is a matter of democratic decency that is grounded in human rights and will be reflected in our policies.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission to continue, I will now shine light on some of the key achievements and plans as we look ahead to 2022-2023.

Cayman Islands Fire Service

As this honourable House is fully aware, the fire service provides 911 emergency fire and rescue operational response across Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman, 24 hours, seven days a week, 365 years a year and Mr. Speaker, on a leap year, that extra day? We do not take it off. We are there too, sir.

Currently, three fire stations, located in West Bay, George Town and Frank Sound, serve the residents of Grand Cayman. There is one station in Cayman Brac, as is the case of Little Cayman. The Fire Service is equipped with a range of specialist personnel, trucks, boats and technical resources, allowing the Department to respond to an impressive broad range of emergencies.

Additionally, as part of the country's National Disaster Management Framework, the Fire Service is an integral component of the National Emergency Operation Centre, providing emergency response capabilities jointly with partner agencies, including Hazard Management, Cayman Islands Coast Guard, the Regiment, Public Works and so many more.

Mr. Speaker, if I were delivering these remarks in years gone by, I would have probably described the Fire Service as a “Fire Fighting and Rescue Service”, and perhaps not given it a second thought. However, we are pushing a wave of modernisation across our security and public safety entities, and that includes the Fire Service. Strategically, we have been evolving to an all-hazard fire rescue service—in other words, we are making official what they used to do before. That really is our vision: An organisation of firefighters prepared for

every hazard, Mr. Speaker. Herein lies an example of a resilience outcome for these Islands.

Mr. Speaker, we will not ignore that the process of modernisation and evolution has naturally created additional operational responsibilities which the Fire service must rise to meet.

As such, we will continue to build preparedness within the organisation to support every level of hazard response, whether it happens on an airfield, in a building or a vehicle, or underwater; or whether it involves hazardous material, confined space, building collapse, fire extinguishment, medical, dive rescue, search and rescue, extraction, code enforcement or arson investigation. As such, Mr. Speaker, we will do three very important things over the next two years, as it concerns the fire service.

1. We will invest in technical, management and leadership training within a standard-based competency framework right-sized to meet the modernisation needs of the Cayman Islands Fire service;
2. We will invest in equipment, trucks, vessels, and other technologies that support safe systems that work across the spectrum of community hazard risks; and
3. We will build strategic partnerships to support modernisation and all-hazards capability.

In respect to building and maintaining our capabilities to deliver emergency fire rescue services, we will prioritise strategic capital investments with a view to maintain industrial standards, effectively protect property, and save lives, without compromising the safety of firefighters. Delivering the possibilities of a modern fire rescue service requires that we properly invest in personal protective equipment, technical tools, fleet and other resources that not only facilitate rescues, but also protect our firefighters as they put their lives on the line for us.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue modernising our fire service, our focus will remain on professionalism of the service, as well as improving response times; ensuring gender equity among staff; protecting deterioration of critical assets; and ensuring competence and compliance with firefighting and rescue standards across our domestic training, investigation, and air drone services.

Mr. Speaker, another thing: I have promised many firefighters past and present, that I will do my best to eliminate the culture of cronyism, nepotism, and bullying, that has crept into our fire service—and we are on our way to doing that, Mr. Speaker.

The Cayman Islands Regiment

Mr. Speaker, I will now provide this honourable House with a few brief remarks in relation to the Cayman Islands Regiment.

The Regiment is a new entity under the Ministry of Home Affairs whose purpose is to provide disaster relief and security within the Cayman Islands and the wider Caribbean region. In a very short period of time, the regiment has demonstrated significant value to our communities as the newest component of our national disaster management framework.

Most notably, the Regiment has undertaken a programme of developing a fit-for-purpose fleet and acquiring key operational equipment to support a disaster response and humanitarian aid remit. With a view to increase its readiness in areas of disaster relief efforts, the regiment has acquired seven fully-serviced ex-military vehicles, and two lightweight water purification systems. The expanded fleet and additional equipment will continue strengthening our disaster preparedness and rapid operational deployment response capabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I voted against this, you know—against the Regiment, and now it is in my lap. They wanted 150, budget constraints do not allow it, but let us say the 75 we have, I will ensure are the best 75—and what the public was concerned about: it being an army? It is not. Forget that, I am making sure of that; but, Mr. Speaker, the work they are doing... Just our field station for COVID; [it was] said it would take two or three weeks to put that hospital together; the Regiment had it completed in almost a week.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: They [were] also very useful during that so-called Storm Grace, which was really a hurricane. They were everywhere, helping everyone. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the country: *Put your mind at ease; it is not an army.* It is not an army, Mr. Speaker, but it will evolve into many things, [and through] the discipline that it brings to many [of the] people who are doing it part time, the country is slowly getting to a better place.

As such, the Regiment must continue to pursue professional development initiatives that enhance military education through traditional and non-traditional learning opportunities. For this reason, training will remain a key focus of the regiment over the next two years, as we seek to increase leadership and professional growth amongst all ranks of the organisation.

Mr. Speaker, I tell the country once again: This will not be a retirement ground for a bunch of Englishmen to come over here and park themselves in it. We will promote and grow our own! I said it: Caymanians first, Caymanians second and Caymanians third; and that will not change because I am a Minister now. It has gotten worse.

Mr. Speaker, it should be highlighted that the Regiment has received valuable support through partnership with the United Kingdom's Royal Military Academy and the organisation will continue to leverage such

relationships to deliver command and leadership training to junior officers, junior non-commissioned officers, and potential junior non-commissioned officers.

Through to the partnership, I was most pleased to see two Caymanian cadet officers successfully complete the commissioning course at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, which led to their commissions as second lieutenants. Along the same lines is also a robust internal leadership and development framework of local workshops hosted by the Regiment, which has resulted in the promotion of 16 troopers.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me... Mr. Speaker, the Governor. You heard other people speak of the Governor; there was nobody more critical of him than me, after what we went through here. Mr. Speaker, make me tell you: I watched the man come to my cultural events. I watched him sit, and read, and listen carefully. I sat and had conversations concerning things in the Regiment that were off the record. He came back and said to me, "*Yes, what you expressed was there.*" That was the first [time] I said, *Okay, I am going to listen to the Cabinet Secretary* who said, "*the Governor is a good man, give him a chance.*"

Mr. Speaker... the Regiment. The Governor understands our feelings; he understands how the public feels about it. Some other people do not, but he does, and I want to take my hat off to a man whom I see trying to understand our culture; trying to understand what we grew up believing in, and working with us, and I want to say thank you to Governor Roper.

Especially in the Regiment; he has helped me a lot with this—when I did not understand, just to sit down and talk through it. He and Mike have been a blessing, and I want to say thank you to the Governor, especially, for his help and guidance in these things. He is not a bad fellow. The only thing we have left to do... We want to take him to "session" at Rockets, but Rockets is not open anymore.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, the Regiment will continue to build its operational capacity and leadership resources. It is imperative that efforts are focused upon providing training and development throughout the organisation. For this reason, we are engaging with our UK partner to facilitate training by a special UK military training team next summer.

At the same time, the organisation's continued growth will be supported by the acquisition of important fleet and equipment. These resources will be prioritised in collaboration with our partners, and in alignment with National Risk Assessment and mitigation plans. Mr. Speaker, the Regiment's strategic priorities are inter-linked and clearly align with achieving the broad outcome in respect of providing solutions to improve the well-being of our people so they can achieve their full potential.

In tandem with the National Emergency Operations Centre and other stakeholders and partner groups, its primary mission will be disaster preparation and delivery of humanitarian aid and relief services. In this context, the Regiment will promote and support opportunities for multi-agency and joint-task-force services which have proven essential in the delivery of resilience outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to pause and recognise the important role of His Excellency the Governor (which I did just now), in the function of the Regiment. Thank you very much.

Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC)

Mr. Speaker, I will now comment briefly in respect to the Department of Public Safety Communications. It is a Department that we seldom see in the spotlight, however I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the organisation is central to our ability to save lives, protect property and enhance public safety.

At the Department's core is a remit to deliver a wide range of critical emergency communication services, surveillance capabilities, and electronic offender-monitoring services. The Department also receives and processes emergency and non-emergency calls for service, dispatching the appropriate emergency resources as circumstances require, on a 24/365 basis.

Mr. Speaker, the Department also manages the Electronic Monitoring Centre which delivers secure electronic monitoring service that enables our criminal justice partners to manage the risk of offenders.

On the topic of the National CCTV programmes, I am pleased to say [that] the Department has finalised a proposal for the implementation of Phase Two of the National CCTV Programme, which will encompass 20 camera locations in the Sister Islands, with full implementation anticipated in the first quarter of next year. This upcoming work will build on recent achievements whereby a number of new camera locations were installed across Grand Cayman—and Barkers, Mr. Speaker. They are putting them [at] the head of Barkers for us; now we should start to catch people who are dumping [illegally] up there.

[Desk thumping]

National Public Safety Communications Radio tower

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: The Department will continue with the relocation of the new 300-foot National Public Safety Communications Radio tower in the Northward area. In addition, the Department proudly operates the Next-Gen 911 Capability, and over the next two years we will continue giving the highest priority to the protection of public safety.

Non-intrusive personal medical devices for the elderly

Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned innovation and will now quickly mention a great example. The Department of Public Safety is a key part of a multi-agency task force, exploring the use of non-intrusive personal medical devices for the elderly. The initiative is sponsored by the Older Persons Council and seeks to mitigate certain vulnerabilities experienced by older persons while helping to safely facilitate independent living experience.

The goal is to leverage emerging technologies to enable elderly people to benefit from rapid alert notifications to responsible persons or entities [should] they require urgent assistance—an elderly person is at home by themselves and something happens, they just press a simple button hanging [from] around their neck and we know [they] got a problem. We are there for them, if they cannot talk. This is the plan as well to help our older generation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, additional technological advances are planned in relation to computer-aided dispatch hardware and software; these upgrades include the delivery of wireless technology into public safety vehicles, which would allow for public safety and criminal justice software to be assessed in the field. The objective, is to pursue faster emergency responses with greater information available to the responders.

The DPSC also intends to upgrade the uninterrupted power supplies that support the continuity of electric power for the computer aided dispatch software and hardware in the event of major electronic unity failure. We have just approved for the bunker in the Brac to be replaced as well.

Department of Community Rehabilitation

Mr. Speaker the Department of Community Rehabilitation (DCR) is mandated by the Courts and Conditional Release Board to provide thorough reports, risk assessments, intervention programmes, and quality supervision and rehabilitation of offenders in the community and institutions. The DCR works in partnership with various agencies to rehabilitate offenders, reduce re-offending, protect the public and provide victim support services.

Changes Supervision Strategy

I am pleased to highlight a few achievements on the back of which we will build our plans over the next two years. Notably, there has been substantial advancement in professional development; for example, all probation officers have been fully trained in the Changes Supervision Strategy. These enhanced methods of working with offenders to reduce re-offending is critical as monthly, the Department provides service to almost 200 victims, and maintains over 700 cases of supervision in the community.

Mr. Speaker, although DCR is a relatively small Department that may be somewhat overlooked, it is mighty in its capacity to impact change and improve security, public safety, and community well-being. It works directly with every criminal justice entity and most human service agencies across all three Islands, thus making it central to the criminal justice system and a hub for key information on offenders. It is said to be the “hands and feet” of the Court in many respects, and is heavily relied upon to work with offenders considered “unmanageable” by many other agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I have come to appreciate that the more effective DCR and our criminal justice system is at managing offenders from a risk-informed position, the safer and more secure our jurisdiction will be; however, Mr. Speaker, there must be a system in place to support the collaborative approach, such as an offender management framework—an integrated system, alongside quality assurance and platforms, for the exchange and analysis of intelligence.

At a time when firearm violence has increased and there are legitimate concerns about gang violence, the Department is geared to advance its standing as a key partner to the law enforcement and intelligence community with strategic priorities intrinsic to addressing crime.

Cayman Cadet Corps

Mr. Speaker, I know the next one is dear to you: the Cayman Cadet Corps. The Cadet Corps is going to be a major player going forward. If I remember correctly, when it was designed, it was for two things:

- To get young people to learn discipline; and
- To feed the police force.

It was specifically said the police force; well, Mr. Speaker, it is sad to say, but the police force has not been good with us and I have found out that it is not the Commissioner, it is somebody below him. I am not naming and shaming yet, but the board has now been put in place. Its Deputy Chair is the Head of Training at the Police Service, Mr. Adrian Seals—a disciplined, career police officer. We have people on the board now...

We have Deputy Chief-Officer of Education, Ms. Lyneth Monteith. So we are going to go all out with the Cadet Corps, because what we are seeing is a Cadet Corps mainly [comprised] of people who have a mixed heritage. Many of us have not jumped in there.

Mr. Speaker, what I hope to do, is that the curriculum that is being looked at and designed by the Commandant will have some elements from police, fire, coast guard... Something from all the forces, so when these young people come out of there, and if five people apply, for example, to the fire service, and one of them has gone through the Cadet Corps, that person will have a better mark, because he has gone through some of the fire service things already in the Cadet

Corps. This should be a feeder for all of our services/disciplines.

How I knew it was the right [approach] Mr. Speaker, is [that] I happened to go on Youth Flex and there was a young lady on it with me, who was working at the Coast Guard—which I must take my hat off to [them], they had just taken five of the Cadet Corps. They got five in their ranks and services and the Commandant tells me they are doing really well; but, the young lady who was on the show with me had not gone through the Cadet Corps. And, the people on Youth Flex asked her about training for the Coast Guard and she said: *“The people who went through the Cadet Corps makes it look like a piece of cake.”* That said it all. She said, *“We had so much to learn; even as simple as the marching, how to do that right, the people who went through the Cadet Corps had it down pat.”* That showed me it plays a part, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, we will grow the Cadet Corps, and we will make it an integral part of Home Affairs in this country.

I must highlight at this point that the Cadet Corps is approaching its 20th Anniversary, which will be marked in May of next year. As a National Voluntary Youth Organisation sponsored by the Government, the Cadet Corps continues to lead the way in its quest to develop the nation’s youth. On Saturday, May 4th 2002, the 1st cohort of recruits graduated to cadets.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary in 2022, we should take a moment to acknowledge the hundreds of young boys and girls who have benefited from the training offered by the Cadet Corps—even a Miss Cayman went through the Cadet Corps, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the strategic priorities identified illustrate the tremendous work that the Cadet Corps has done to upskill, inspire, and adapt to a changing environment. These objectives are aligned with the Government’s broad outcome in the Strategic Policy Statement namely, to provide solutions that improve the well-being of our people so that they can achieve their full potential; support the family system in communities, create a modern social infrastructure, create healthy communities, and create greater employment opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Cadet Corps has been at the forefront of youth development training, and I am most proud that the cadets now form part of the Home Affairs family. We can all take pride in the Cadet Corps, and aim to continue to develop agile strategies that promote the value of citizenship and leadership.

Cayman Islands Prison Service

Mr. Speaker, the last one: the Cayman Islands Prison Service. As this honourable House is aware, Her Majesty’s Cayman Islands Prison Service serves the

public by keeping individuals in custody who have been committed by the Courts, while treating them with dignity and humanity, providing meaningful opportunities to address offending behaviour and preparing them for re-entry into our communities.

Despite a backdrop of progressively deteriorating physical facilities; a daily average population that exceeds design capacity; and a global pandemic that contributed to significant unrest within prisons around the world, the Prison Services achieved a number of notable outcomes recently.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing the Deputy Premier said to me was, "Do not come and ask me for \$30 million or whatever for the prison, when we have to educate and feed our young people who are hungry. Ask for a reasonable amount." Well, Mr. Speaker, the figure that we heard was just a rumour. It was not that bad; but for the last 10 years, *our* prison has failed every test from international bodies. Everything that you can think of, we failed.

Mr. Speaker, we will be building a new section starting next year. It is going to be in stages because that is the way the purse allows us to do it, but it is being done. Mr. Steve Barrett, whom I must pay respect to, will be leaving us next week. On behalf of this House, we would like to wish him the best and say thanks very much—Godspeed, and May God keep your health as long as possible; and announce that Mr. Daniel Greaves has been named the Prison's Director Designate.

When Mr. Barrett said that, I was very happy to know that we now have a Caymanian in charge of the Prison again. Just like the Prison Director before Mr. Barrett, Mr. Neil [Lavis] said, "*Mr. Greaves is more than capable, he just has to want it.*" And Mr. Greaves has said he feels this is the right time, so Mr. Speaker, the country has taken a step forward in putting our own into these top posts.

Mr. Speaker, the Prison Service has a number of problems. For example, when we have someone with mental problems, where do we put them? At the prison, but the staff has not been trained to deal with this [nor] are there facilities for people with mental health issues. We are not supposed to put children with criminals. We are facing all these things at the Prison, and it has had to be innovative and adapt.

The prison is on target to deliver well in excess of 150,000 hours of purposeful activities by the end of the year supported by the facilitation of almost 3,000 virtual visits to keep families connected.

They just signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of the West Indies, so that prisoners can get even more educational courses before they come out; and the Chief Officer is looking at ways to get even the prison officers to use this MOU with the University of the West Indies, for us to get qualified as well through the system.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight the critical capital projects progressed this year:

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for a new, fit-for-purpose prison facility was completed. I am proud to confirm that this Government has approved key recommendations which set the stage for us to move ahead with deliverables related to Phase One of the plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a major capital investment which has received support from both sides of the House, demonstrating the shared understanding that this is necessary if we are to enhance the reputation of the Cayman Islands internationally, while providing comprehensive and modern correctional and rehabilitation services. Our goal here, Mr. Speaker, is to mitigate the risk and enormous liabilities arising due to the current state of the prison.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, our people deserve better, and ultimately, we intend to:

- Deliver more efficient operations;
- A more secure facility;
- Adherence to human rights; and
- Allow for rehabilitation to be at the heart of how the prison functions

Over the next two years, the Cayman Islands Prison will also focus on delivering various initiatives, some of which include mitigating public health risks, developing professional competency frameworks, and strengthening of our strategic partnerships.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I must mention that we must move forward. Over the next two years, our strategic partnerships across the private sector, public service and civil society, will prove to be integral to the prison service. Therefore, continuing to pursue and strengthen these synergies is a priority. These relationships allow for intelligence-sharing—especially in respect to protecting against the danger of organised crime and gang activities within the prison; prioritising child safeguarding; and shielding victims and the public from criminality.

They also allow for partner agencies to provide services that are complementary to our goal of rehabilitation, and reintegration for people in prison, as well as those transitioning out of prison. Mr. Speaker, before I close, I would like to personally recognise Mr. Steve Barrett once again for his invaluable contribution, and wish him well.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I am most grateful for your indulgence allowing me to speak here today. I presented an overview of strategic issues, and a high-level road map for the next two years with respect to the operations of the Ministry of Home Affairs. As a Government, we have taken the important step of deciding what is truly important based on input of the Caymanian people. We will now focus resources and actions on those objectives with certainty and precision, with the understanding that good strategies require difficult decisions.

Mr. Speaker, you can expect that this Ministry will be deliberate in the coordination of actions so as to

address specific challenges based on priorities of the Government. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry looks forward to deploying a coherent mix of policy and action designed to surmount a number of high-stake challenges in the security and public safety arena. Across Home Affairs, strategic priorities will intersect with a number of the important broad outcomes.

Notably, our contributions to safer communities, for example, will be evident through work that includes expanding the National CCTV Programme, enhancing 911 and communication systems, strengthening mental health services in prisons, leveraging the offender management framework and building a modern, fit-for-purpose prison.

Mr. Speaker, throughout my remarks you have also heard, that built into the strategic development of the Ministry is a mission to increase the value placed on training, development and the creation of opportunities for Caymanians within our workforce.

Examples include the over-arching strategic development of partnerships between the Cadet Corps and the various uniformed services and public safety agencies, to create pathways through curriculum design that not only facilitate youth leadership, but also employment prospects. Additionally, the comprehensive people strategy by the Prison; professionalization plans for the Regiment and the fire service; and plans for both the Prison and DCR to improve employability for offenders, all evidence this strategic intent.

I am also pleased to say that we will pursue various projects and procurement with the view to support broad outcomes related to climate change and resilience, and sustainable development. This will be reflected in deliberate consideration of our options when procuring goods and services, and evidenced by the upcoming acquisition of a fully-electric van designed for prison transportation.

Mr. Speaker, and fellow Members of Parliament, I have presented an overview of planning for the Ministry of Home Affairs, as well as a brief overview of how these relate to the Government's desired broad outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assist something that was said yesterday across the Floor. I made a simple phone call to the Cricket Association, and I must say a few things that the Member did not mention, [such as]: that he was the first Caymanian to go play professionally in England or that he was on the team the first time we won a match in the ICC Cup.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Right, I forgot that. That is the twin switch.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, I remember the Cricket Association calling me to find out if Cayman Airways could fly directly to Antigua, et cetera, so I knew they did not go, but I did not get into the intricacies of it; so I made a call, and there are things that the Member was not appraised of by his advisers.

1. Qualification is not based on attending [but rather,] on your junior programmes; and
2. It would have cost \$122,000 to get the team to Antigua, because:
 - The COVID situation;
 - Some people did not have VISAs;
 - The flight from Jamaica to Antigua was only once a week, or something like that.

Thus, everything worked out, it would be \$120,000 to attend and take part.

The Association felt that [as] there are no new teams at this time, it was better to [invest] that into their youth programmes; but Cayman not attending on this occasion will not affect their attendance next time.

Going back to what I said earlier, this is one of those associations that I will be monitoring, because I want to see development. Too many associations in this country have a bunch of old people they call national team players, who could not catch a cold at this stage in life, but they are still making the national team—and why? Because they have not developed any young people to come through. It is the modus operandi in this country.

It is easy to pick somebody who comes from another country; they cannot make the team in their own country, but they come here and make the Cayman team. No; got to develop our own. That is what they got to be doing in the next three or four years. We are going to be developing—developing big time. Junior programmes and junior competitions.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker, I hope that clarified for the Member for George Town [West]; and when you talk about, "I managed the teams", Mr. Speaker, just to let the House know—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: —Mr. Speaker, my first day as manager I was called in because the Member across the Floor roughed-up somebody a little bit too much, and they called him in and warned him that one more infringement and he would be suspended. That was my opening bowler, Mr. Speaker, I could not let my opening bowler be suspended. The next match... he did it again.

[Laughter]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: As he did it, Mr. Speaker, I rushed out on the edge of the field and started to say, “*Christopher, shut up; Christopher behave.*”

When I took it before the [Association], I carried Christopher, I did not carry David—David did both transgressions, but Christopher took the blame the second time so at the end, both twins were warned, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: I mean, I was their manager and I could not tell the difference, so I know the people over there could not tell a difference, Mr. Speaker.

However, I will be speaking to the Member one-on-one, because I am one of those... he said something yesterday and I said something; yes, I am guilty. I did not know that he was taking it that way, but I will see him one-on-one and apologise, but I will say this much: He represented this country with pride.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Bernie A. Bush: And that is what I want to see all of the associations get back to: We make our own. We do not have to bring people from someplace else.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, the budget that is before you today, reflects not only my commitment, but also the Government's and those that make up the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Youth Sports, Culture and Heritage. Therefore, Mr. Speaker please let me emphasise that for success, it will take all of us in this honourable House; the listening public; my Ministries and I, to be active and committed partners in this process. I would therefore like to invite persons to put personal differences aside and focus on what is best for our people and our country.

I would like to say [thank you] to the Member for George Town South. When I called her [to] ask what she needed in her area to put it in the [budget], she called me back and I appreciated that—that is working together. We intend to make this country better than how we found it; plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker, thank you to my colleagues. Thank you for your backing; thanks for the encouragement, and to the people of the Cayman Islands, continue to pray for wisdom and strength for us.

Thank you all very much.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Proceedings will be suspended until 2:15pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:48pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:32pm

The Speaker: Please be seated. Continuation of debate on the budget.

The Honourable Deputy Governor.

Office of the Deputy Governor

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my contribution to the debate on this year's Budget Address. In doing so, I wish to thank His Excellency the Governor, for his leadership and tireless efforts to advocate on behalf of the people of these Islands.

The UK's assistance in providing early and free access to COVID-19 vaccines and now the boosters, has literally saved lives in this country. It has also bought us crucial time to safeguard 82 per cent of our population and growing; and to develop and to execute the reopening of our borders in a manner which affords the people of this country the greatest levels of protection in an uncertain world.

Equally, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Budget Address harkens to the very purpose of why the Civil Service existence. A call to keep alive the promise of the Caymanian dream for current and future generations; it is perfectly aligned with our Civil Service's purpose to make lives better. The Government's policy priorities set out fertile ground upon which the civil service may initiate and expand policies focused on enhancing the lives of our citizens.

Along with Chief Officers and other Civil Service leaders, I very much look forward to working alongside the Government to deliver the bold strategic broad outcomes. As Deputy Governor and Head of the Civil Service, I can confirm that there have been solid foundations put in place which will allow us to proceed with the Government's ambitious plans and vision for this country.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward, we must take note of the present challenges which the pandemic continues to pose. I wish to assure the Members of this honourable House, and the country at large, that keeping Cayman safe and getting all Caymanians back to work is as central a priority for the Civil Service, as it is for the Government.

Together with our SAGC colleagues, the Civil Service continues to prioritise the battle against COVID at our most senior leadership levels, while simultaneously delivering all of the other public services which the country relies upon.

Programme Board

Most recently, this has taken the form of a Programme Board for the safe reopening of the Cayman Islands' borders. The team within the Office of the Deputy Governor has played a crucial role in coordinating and supporting the Government's National Border Reopening Programme and a National Critical Readiness Preparedness and Response Plan.

We have had the pleasure of bringing together a world-class team of public health and other subject matter experts to combat COVID and to allow all sectors of the Cayman Islands, and most recently our travel and tourism sector, to get back to work.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to record my profound thanks to every Member of the Programme Board for their outstanding work not only in developing the National Critical Readiness Preparedness and Response Plan, but the work they did last year, when we opened to repatriation flights and developed the policies and procedures for quarantine of residents and at the Government-run facilities.

The Programme Board and Travel Cayman, with the support of the Government and the people of the Cayman Islands, successfully kept COVID-19 out of the community for 14 months. Mr. Speaker, this is a world class achievement; not many countries in this world have been able to achieve that. The Programme Board was made up of civil and public servants all committed to working together to reduce the spread of the virus and to reduce deaths.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Governor and pay tribute to the doctors and nurses at the Health Services Authority (HSA) and Health City who are risking their lives right now, treating COVID-19 positive patients. Also, the team at Public Health for their tremendous performance since the lockdown.

Thanks to all members of our uniform and frontline services who also risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join the Governor in acknowledging the work done by Dr. John Lee, who is leaving us; Mr. Steve Barrett and the Ombudsman, Ms. Sandra Hermiston, who are all returning to their homelands. We want to thank them for their service since they have been in our Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to mention and recognise the tremendous support that the Programme Board and the Government have received from Cayman Airways. When flights shut down, they redeployed their staff to Travel Cayman and continue to do so until today. Mr. Speaker, we will be forever grateful to Cayman Airways for their support. It is a great example of team effort and team Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, turning to some of the day-to-day work being performed by my Office, not linked to reopening the borders—I think sometimes people believe that all the other work has stopped, but it has not. We have been doing some amazing work across the entire civil service.

For those who wish to not only visit but make Cayman their home, this month marks one full year since my office launched the new BOTC Online System, enabling the public to submit applications for naturalisation and registration as British Overseas Territories Citizens electronically. Before I became Deputy Governor, a person would make at least three-four trips

to the Government building in order to submit an application for naturalisation; now they do not have to make even one.

For the last few months we have been conducting naturalisation ceremonies by Zoom, being as innovative as possible and trying to keep everyone safe. So, you sit at home, submit your application for naturalisation, and once it is approved, you can sit at home and get sworn in as a new citizen; hopefully Mr. Speaker, we will be able to go back to in-person ceremonies shortly—I know people really enjoy these.

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

In promoting good governance, the secretarial services provided to various boards and committees in 2021 allowed for their continued effective operation. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) delivered its first annual report and is on track to meet its annual target of four meetings per year.

The Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy

The Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy has held three meetings to date and dealt with applications for 13 persons of which 11 were approved, mainly due to COVID-19-related circumstances.

Expungement Board

Mr. Speaker, you were present when we passed the Criminal Records Spent Convictions Law. The purpose of that Law was to allow our people who had convictions; and whose convictions had been on record for a number of years; and whose convictions had been spent, [to have] those records expunged once they had satisfied a crime-free period.

Mr. Speaker, between January and October 2021, 36 persons benefit from the fresh start provided by an expungement of their criminal records by the Expungement Board. We now have 36 of our people who can boast of a clean police record; and those persons are given a real opportunity to get jobs, Mr. Speaker. Some of those persons had been prevented from getting employment for years although they had reformed themselves; although they were of good character for many years, that one conviction was preventing them from getting employment. That is now gone, Mr. Speaker.

The Cayman Islands Independent Monitoring Board

The Cayman Islands Independent Monitoring Board delivered its 2020 Annual Report and continues to operate as the eyes and ears of the community, by conducting monitoring visits and responding to prisoners' applications for support. Six new board members were trained and on-boarded. Critical support is also

being provided to the agencies responsible for child safeguarding programmes.

As part of the strategic support provided for good governance initiatives, my team:

- coordinated the development of management responses by Civil Service ministries and departments to recommendations made by the Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee, in order to document the nature and extent of progress made on topics such as: fighting corruption in the Cayman Islands and Government's use of consultants and temporary staff.
- Developed a broad plan, in collaboration with the Minister of Finance, for a review of the way the Cayman Islands Government compensates its employees who suffer a serious injury or death at work. The more detailed review will commence in 2022, with the objective of ensuring a clear, fair, and effective system of providing workers' compensation.

SRIU

Professional Certification Programmes

Through the SRIU Professional Certification Programmes, 50 persons achieved foundation-level qualification in Project Management Fundamentals, Change Management and Better Business Cases; and 17 persons achieved practitioner-level qualifications in Change Management and Better Business Cases.

Mr. Speaker, this fits well with the Deputy Premier's announcement that he would like to see many Government projects being done in house. That means we need to ensure that if we are not using consultants, our staff is trained to be able to provide that work, and that is exactly what we are doing: Making sure that our teams are trained to the appropriate levels.

While this year saw most government-offices return to business-as-usual activities, the Office of the Deputy Governor SRIU unit has remained largely redeployed and focused on providing policy advice on projects and programme-level services; and support to the Deputy Governor, sponsors and project teams from across the civil service and the wider public service, in order to support a safe and successful planned reopening of the Cayman Islands borders during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since August 2020, the key areas of support have included:

- leading and coordinating the development of Phase One of the border reopening strategy and plan—we are now at Phase Four, but we had Phases One, Two and Three;
- Assisting the Deputy Governor to establish and maintain a programme board of Chief Officers and other senior leaders from the wider public service, to provide strategic leadership to the

Travel Cayman border reopening programme and policy advice to Cabinet;

- Working in partnership with the programme board to establish the new Travel Cayman Department to manage all aspects of incoming travel to the Cayman Islands under a repatriation flight regime, as part of Phase One of the border reopening programme; and
- to provide strategic and day to day operational leadership for the department until July 2021.

To lead and facilitate development of the five-phase National Border Reopening Programme and provide programme management services to support its effective implementation.

To lead and facilitate the development and implementation of a National Readiness Preparedness and Response Plan to support the decision making and preparation for the transition to Phases Four and Five of the border reopening programme.

To lead policy development in a wide range of priority areas, including the strategic national deployment of lateral flow test kits in schools and within the tourism sector; to develop a local capacity to evaluate existing data on COVID-19 infections and vaccinations; and to use the information to support data-driven policy decisions on reopening.

Key priorities for the Office of the Deputy Governor in 2022 and 2023 include:

- to continue to provide policy advice and programme management services to Travel Cayman and the National Border Reopening Programme and, in time, leading and coordinating the close-up phase of the programme—and we are all looking to that day, Mr. Speaker, when we can close down Travel Cayman and we do not need to have that agency anymore. We are praying that day will come soon...
- To deliver a broad range of strategic projects carried forward to completion during the next budget period; including projects postponed as a result of the redeployment, in 2020 and 2021, of key Office-of-the-Deputy-Governor resources, for support of the border reopening efforts. (These includes updating the Marriage Law, which the Attorney General is very keen on, and has been asking for our support in that area; update the Criminal Records Spent Convictions Act in order to ensure that the expungement process functions effectively and delivers the fresh start envisioned by policy makers and to address some key areas of inconsistency.)
- Policy advice and proposals to guide the Deputy Governor in Cabinet under Remuneration of Boards and Committees;
- programme management services to update and oversee the implementation of the national

anti-gang and national child safeguarding strategies and plans. (Mr. Speaker the Leader of the Opposition asked if the Government had funded the anti-gang strategy and I am very pleased to say yes, they have. They have put money behind that strategy in order to see it rolled out in 2022.)

- Sharing best practices in relation to child safeguarding policies and operations;
- establishing monitoring boards for prisons in support of Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) initiatives for the British Overseas Territories; and
- supporting a project to evaluate and recommend any necessary improvement in workers' compensation provisions within the Civil Service.

To fully increase the growing number of civil servants with certifications and qualifications in Business Case Development, Change Management and Project Management through training facilitated by SRIU. Growing our civil service competencies in these areas we believe, will help us to improve the chances of success of the many projects undertaken by the Civil Service. We will also continue to facilitate sensitisation training for board members of SAGCs on the Public Authorities Act and the Procurement Act.

Portfolio of the Civil Service

Mr. Speaker, allow me to speak a bit about the work of the Portfolio of the Civil Service. The Senior Management team within the Portfolio of the Civil Service provides leadership in three overarching areas: Human Resources strategy, governance and public sector reform.

Within this past budget cycle, the POCS Core HR team delivered numerous policies to help the public service remain safe, while delivering normal services. Centralised HR teams rolled out the Government's first remote working and flexible working policies, which increased civil service resiliency and has become a permanent part of the CIG HR toolkit, giving many civil servants a voice in how they deliver services going forward.

We are reminded that work is what you produce; it is not where you go and man. Civil Service can produce work while working remotely; in fact, many persons are felt to be more productive when they work from home—but we do accept Minister Bush's earlier statement that there are some services which just cannot be provided from home, and those are services provided by our emergency services.

CIG HR Connect

The POCS launched CIG HR Connect, linking HR practices across the wider public sector. This saw

HR policies and practices being harmonised in some instances, between statutory authorities and in other cases adapted and adopted by the private sector.

It acted as the competent authority issuing curfew exemptions to civil servants providing essential services during the lockdown.

It launched CIG Cares and civil servants have stepped up by making payroll deductions to fund food vouchers for those in need in the community, and raising over \$46,000 during the first six months.

I would like to thank Chief Officer Ahern who has been a driving force behind CIG Cares—it has really made a difference, so thank you, Miss Ahearn.

We developed and implemented a lateral flow policy and test regime for the civil service to prevent transmission of COVID-19 within workplaces by enabling the early detection and isolation of positive cases.

Reward and Engagement

During 2020 and 2021, we made significant strides to advance a reward agenda. We initiated a review of our reward offerings and commenced work to articulate a reward and recognition strategy and develop a blueprint for the future.

In January 2020, we implemented a five per cent cost of living adjustment; and mid-year, we delivered a one-off, differentiated honorarium award recognising COVID-19 responders and, in particular, the men and women who delivered essential services while facing elevated risk associated with ongoing face-to-face public contact.

In January 2020, we made legislative changes to the civil service and produced Death-in-Service provision to support families at their most vulnerable time. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, already this year, some six civil service families have already benefited from the provisions which extend full salary and healthcare benefits for an additional three months when a civil servant dies while serving.

Imagine what this meant to these families; by preserving a family's full income for three months, we are allowing those left behind to focus on what truly matters: Grieving their loved ones, sending them off with dignity, and prepping for the reality of their altered future. As a caring employer, we are happy to demonstrate that we are supportive of civil service families in the good and the challenging times, just as our civil service teams can be relied upon to be here for those we are privileged to serve.

We have implemented changes to our annual leave entitlement which brought minimum annual vacation entitlement to our low-paid wage workers, in line with their salaried civil servant colleagues. And, this month, with the support of Government, for which we are incredibly grateful, we are again able to recognise the contributions of the civil service with a one-off honorarium payment for all civil servants below strategic directors' level.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Deputy Premier for his sterling support for the honorarium; he and I share a vision of rewarding high performance. To illustrate this point, allow me to share a story with you about the real-life impact of this honorarium.

Just last week, a civil servant came up to me and thanked the Government, and me, for the honorarium. She stated that her family had been struggling to make ends meet because her husband worked within the tourism sector and was unable to find steady employment over the past 18 months; she was worried that for the first time, there may not be gifts under the Christmas tree for their children, but the honorarium brought Christmas cheer and a few presents.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to lead a civil service that cares about their staff and work with a Government that cares about its people; it is something we all should be really proud of, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Deputy Governor, Franz I. Manderson: An additional payment, Mr. Speaker, is aimed at celebrating and incentivising vaccinations for men and women in uniform, travel, and those delivering residential care to our elderly and most vulnerable clients. By getting vaccinated, they have demonstrated personal leadership to reduce the risk of acquiring and transmitting the COVID-19 virus where the outcomes for critically vulnerable parents could be most dire, or where the risk to the continuity of an essential service is most pronounced, given these teams' higher exposure.

I have said publicly, and I think it bears repeating: Sir, my greatest fear as Head of the Civil Service is to attend the funeral of a public servant in circumstances which could have been avoided. We cannot afford complacency, and the take up at certain frontline positions is self-reported to be at lower levels than we would hope—in other words, our frontline services vaccination rates are not as high as they should be.

This honorarium is the latest desperate plea to those men and women who are very brave, yet we need them to be smart. Follow the lead of the vast majority of civil servants and protect yourselves, protect your teams, protect your families, and protect those we serve. We have already had unvaccinated civil servants hospitalised with COVID. Thankfully, they recovered and were able to return home.

Mr. Speaker, going into battle every day without the vaccine, is like responding to an emergency without your protective gear. It is just not wise to do so. It is dangerous, and it could result in your families at home, and work, suffering the pain of your absence. We are trying everything we can to urge you to protect yourselves. Do not be fooled by believing this is just a flu; while many only experience mild symptoms, for others COVID can be fatal and we are seeing that, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to recognise, as well, the vast majority of civil servants who did the right thing and were vaccinated early. Yesterday we held another flu clinic at the Government Administration Building, reserved for public servants to obtain their first, second or booster shot, and I understand it was well attended. As a caring employer, Mr. Speaker, we are doing all we can to keep our people safe, and in particular, the ones on the front line of this battle.

Mr. Speaker, the Governor just returned from the UK and he shared with us that one of the other, I think Crown Dependencies, was seeing a surge in hospitalisations. Their vaccination rate is very, very, high but their booster rate is very low; so, our plea today, Mr. Speaker, is for everyone to go out and get your booster shot now. Let us not wait for it to be too late. Let us not wait for you to get sick. Go out and get your booster shot today.

2020 Engagement Survey

Mr. Speaker, our promise to our teams is not only to act in their best interests but to actively listen to them, so that we understand their concerns.

Our 2020 engagement survey saw an increase in our overall engagement scores by 2 per cent and we are currently seeking feedback from across the service with our 2021 engagement survey.

Mr. Speaker, this commitment to deliver the survey at this highly difficult time, proves that the Civil Service cares about what is happening within our organisation during both the good and the challenging times. Already thousands of civil servants have provided their views which we continue to embed in our decision making.

During the current budget cycle, we are procuring a new integrated human resource management system, which paves the way towards real-time data analytics; and the deployment of improved workforce planning. Starting this month with an e-recruitment module, new HR models are beginning to go live, and will continue throughout the year to transform HR delivery including succession planning.

On my behalf, the Portfolio's team supported the recruitment of a range of capable members to my senior team, including the confirmation of the Chief Officer in the Ministry of Health and Wellness in September 2021. The team also facilitated the recruitment of the first-ever cohort of the Cayman Islands Coast Guard and are poised to assist, with the next round of recruitment—and Mr. Speaker, I do not have to tell you how proud we are of our new Coast Guard members.

People Team of the Year - Public Sector

In September 2021, the core POCS team gained international recognition, when it was awarded the People Team of the Year - Public Sector by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

The Portfolio won this title from an impressive field of seven finalists in that category, including very large public health organisations across the United Kingdom. I wish to really commend the work done by this team, led by our Chief Officer Mrs. Gloria McField-Nixon. They have advanced our journey of being a world-class civil service.

Mr. Speaker, the thing about it [is], a portfolio within the civil service has won an award and beat out other agencies in the entire United Kingdom. Now you see why we believe, and why we have great faith in our vision of being a world-class civil service.

We can do it, Mr. Speaker. This little Island can do some amazing things—and we have.

I have had the pleasure of attending award ceremonies at home and viewing submissions made abroad, and the accolades that pour in for the Cayman Islands Government's (CIG) work in Human Resources, communications, and investors in people, to name a few, have allowed Cayman's name to stand tall in the world. Locally or internationally, within the public or private sector, we have shown that we are making strides to make lives better.

This is something [that] I hope can be appreciated when one sits in this honourable House or in the community. Our civil service is far from perfect, but we are committed to getting better, and to living up to the tremendous privilege that we have, of serving the Government and the people of the Cayman Islands. By keeping our focus on serving even better than we have in the past, we are gaining a reputation as an employer of choice, as evidenced by the many high-calibre appointments we have been able to make over the past two years.

In 2022 and 2023, the core POCS will maximise the benefits of the new IT system that I mentioned earlier, which will support good governance and efficiency by increasing automation, standardising HR workflows, and providing an integrated single source for employee information. It will also improve the ability of CIG to manage HR data—a foundation requirement for the delivery of wide HR requirements, such as workforce planning. The project is being delivered with significant involvement of diverse teams of civil servants including HR professionals and persons who have recently obtained qualification in Project Management, Change Management, and Learning and Development.

Work to facilitate knowledge transfer and to deepen Caymanian expertise has already begun with civil servant secondments into the POCS' project team, to deliver components of the new system. Newly qualified persons are sitting beside their more experienced counterparts to create a new generation of internal experts capable of delivering future change projects.

By undertaking rotations within the POCS, they will gain first-hand experience of the new system's capabilities, but will also boost their experience with project management, user testing and training and development. In this way, the benefits of the project will go

beyond technological innovations to workforce development. This is consistent with our **"each one, teach one"** ethos, and brings fresh thinking to the table to tackle long-standing legacy challenges.

The first module to roll out will quickly put our customers first by implementing e-recruitment. We aim to enhance the application experience for prospective new hires and to promote the civil service as a modern employer. We want to make that first interaction that our potential employees have with us, impactful.

Work on a reward agenda will continue next year, to ensure that our reward and recognition policies and practices align with our reward principles—transparent, fair, and enabling; this work also supports the Government's strategic broad outcome of social justice in the workplace. We will reengineer our job evaluation processes and implement a working conditions factor which will recognise the demands on employees whose roles possess a higher level of risk.

Second Chances Programme

The POCS will continue to deliver the Second Chances Programme which provides opportunities for individuals to re-join the workforce after they have completed their prison sentence and paid their debt to society. This programme has seen success over the last few years, with five new placements during the past budget cycle. Of this number, two have resulted in a permanent hire, and two are successfully completing their probationary period as we seek to support them in finding permanent employment.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of this Programme. We have our people, who have been unable to obtain a job for years, now become productive members of the civil service—some of them becoming permanent members of the civil service; and Mr. Speaker, not one person has failed in this programme. Not one Caymanian has become a recidivist after gaining a job with us, and that says a lot about the programme and our people.

Emerging Talent Programme

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, with Government's support, operational savings were reinvested to create the Emerging Talent Programme. The fund enables the hiring of recently qualified Caymanians to civil service roles where they just need a foot in the door, mentorship, and the opportunity to gain experience, as they transition into permanent roles.

Through this programme, Mr. Speaker, we have already seen returning Caymanian veterinarians and two agricultural officers take up specialised positions. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? You go away, you study, you become a veterinarian and you come back home and cannot get a job, and the reason you cannot get a job, is because you have no experience—

well, how are you going to get the experience if you do not get a job?

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Government for funding this programme, because now we are giving our people a foot in the door; an opportunity to work in the Department of Agriculture with experienced veterinarians, and gain the experience that they so rightly deserve. This is a very proud moment for us; this programme is making a real difference in the lives of young Caymanians, and like I said, I wish to thank the Government for supporting it.

In the coming year, as one group finds permanent employment, others can be hired. This programme recognises that there is incredible talent that is just awaiting an opportunity. Mr. Speaker, where these persons have skills that we can put to work within the Civil Service, we aim to provide that opportunity to groups of between five to eight graduates at a time. As a responsible employer, it is our job to provide the opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education said it in her passionate speech yesterday: All our people need is an opportunity, and they will make us proud. Mr. Speaker, we are all here because we were given an opportunity to perform.

I am delighted that we can do the same for our people; however, Mr. Speaker, with opportunity comes responsibility. It is these graduates' job to show up prepared to apply themselves; to be receptive to monitoring and feedback; and to demonstrate their contributions, so that they may obtain permanent employment. It is still early days, but the initial candidates, Mr. Speaker, are doing just that: They are performing well and they are making us proud.

Mr. Speaker, we are actively expanding our talent management programme to support civil servants in reaching their full potential by designing and implementing formal talent reviews, expanding the use of competency frameworks to cover professional groups; and to provide career pathways and building tools that will support corporate level succession planning.

To this end, two highly experienced Caymanian HR professionals, have been hired to focus on talent management, including succession planning and workforce planning.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn my attention to our greatest asset in the civil service: Our people. Taking care of our people continues to deliver many benefits to our organisation. These include improved health and well-being, greater productivity, higher performance, increased job satisfaction, and organisational resilience, especially in these uncertain times. As the strategy matures, we expect to measure the impact of this work by seeing lower levels of absenteeism and less workplace injury and chronic illness.

Wellness Committee

Our Honourable Premier stated in his recent budget address the need for a better work/life balance.

I would like to use this opportunity to share with you and this honourable House, some of the amazing initiatives implemented by our Wellness Committee.

The Wellness Committee, made up of volunteers from representatives across CIG, positively touched the lives of at least 2,800 civil servants through its many programmes this year. Wellness virtual sessions attracted 1,900 viewers between January and November this year. These sessions dealt with mental and nutritional health and provided tips on stress reduction—we all need that, Mr. Speaker.

Each month we have had at least one learning and development session. Our most popular sessions were managing conflict, and how to cope with change in uncertain times. The Wellness team also partnered with Health City who presented on heart health, and diabetes.

An educational movie night was held, featuring the movie *Finding Alice* [sic], which focused on Alzheimer's and dementia. Over 200 persons attended and found this very inspiring; I was one of them, Mr. Speaker. The Alzheimer's Society was also on hand to present and take questions after the movie.

Financial wellness programmes, including two nine-week courses that focused on the Dave Ramsey Method. We also partnered with RCIPS to ensure their entity hosted an in-house session for their staff to suit police officers' schedules. We also negotiated gym membership discounts and staged payments for 120 employees.

In 2021, the Wellness Committee also introduced the Virgin Pulse Go Programme (VP Go) Programme, [through which] approximately 700 civil servants and public servants participated in monitoring their health status and achievement of their health goals—I have my virgin pulse here today; I do not think I got in too many steps, I did not go walking this morning.

At least 83 per cent of members who participated improved in at least, one nutritional habit after participating in VP Go; 55 per cent of members are very healthy or healthy and 59 per cent of members feel our organisation is committed to their health. In the upcoming budget cycle, we would like to see those numbers improve by at least 15 to 20 per cent, as we develop additional ways to support our employees.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to record my thanks to every Member of our Wellness Committee, for their outstanding work during the year. The Minister for Wellness and I have talked about how we can work together to improve wellness not just in the civil service, but across our beloved Islands. We have a passion. We are going to make it happen.

Cayman Islands National Archives

Mr. Speaker, in the past year the National Archives introduced new models of service delivery, so

that the COVID-19 pandemic did not obstruct the Cayman Islands National Archives' services to the public and to the Government. Digital technology allowed the National Archives to strengthen the utilisation of historical records to educate and promote a greater awareness of Cayman's heritage within the community.

In the past year, the National Archives has supported 665 research inquiries, 17 oral history interviews, 7 presentations and 422 historical prints and scans. Numerous schools and other entities were provided access to historical collections held by the National Archives to keep Cayman's history and heritage alive, and our portrayals accurate.

Operational disposal schedules are in development for 13 government departments and SAGCs. The Archives' strategic priorities for 2022 include:

- Strengthening records and information management practices across the Civil service;
- Providing continued training;
- Promoting access to archival and historical collections; and
- Supporting the rollout of a marketing system to annotate sensitive records which warrant stricter access protocols.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Service will continue to develop its role as a trusted advisor, providing independent and objective assurance, advice, and insight to enhance and protect government operations.

The 2022/2023 risk-based audit plan continues to focus the resources of internal audit services on key risks, and is designed to be agile to address emerging risks as required. The plan is set to deliver on a number of topics designed to help our senior managers understand and advance government risk-and control matters.

On the wider stage, our internal audit service is sharing best practices and developing the profession through participation in the Cayman Islands' chapter of the Institute of Internal Audit; Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC); and an ongoing partnership with the UK's Government Internal Audit Agency. The Internal Audit Service is expected to close this year having delivered 800 advisory hours, supported four audit and risk assurance committee meetings, having issued 12 monthly PSMA Compliance reports.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to report that Internal Audit successfully completed its first-ever external quality assessment conducted by international assessors and received a rating of General Conformance (GC), which is the highest achievable rating. By achieving this rating, the Cayman Islands becomes the second jurisdiction within the Caribbean to reach this level of professional recognition and in doing so, has contributed to the public service becoming a world class organisation.

This assessment is good for five years and provides assurance to our clients that the services provided by Internal Audit are conducted in accordance with the international standards for internal auditing on a consistent basis. I want to commend the Acting Director and all his staff at Internal Audit, for achieving this outstanding result.

As the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee continues to mature and fulfil its mandate of providing advice to the Chief Accounting Officer, two developments occurred in 2021: The secretariat functions of the committee were assigned to Internal Audit's professional practice team; and the Audit and Risk Committee effective review were conducted by the government's internal audit agency, which will form as a template from which Internal Audit will be facilitating the committee's future annual assessments.

Internal Audit continues to identify and develop future talent, appointing two Caymanian internal auditors recently. Staff continue professional development to obtain the Certified Internal Auditor qualification, and to strengthen the team's credentials through the individual attaining a number of relevant professional designations, including:

- Chartered Internal Auditor;
- Certified Financial Crime Specialist; and
- Certified Anti-Money Laundering specialist.

In 2022/2023, the Internal Audit Service will deliver a risk-based audit plan and will assess the risk of its own optimal business delivery, by focusing on areas of greater risk and looking at issues affecting its staff, systems, and revenue operation. Having invested in a powerful audit management system—TeamMate Plus—it will continue to take advantage of the features that it provides. The next phase will be the rollout of clients, providing them with secure access to their audit recommendations.

Management Support Unit

Mr. Speaker, our internal consultancy team, the Management Support Unit (MSU), continues to be deployed across the Civil Service to assist senior and middle-level leaders tackling vexing organisational challenges. A key achievement for the five-person team include managing CIG's customer feedback channels across the civil service.

Mr. Speaker, forty customer satisfaction terminals are gathering data directly from our customers, and in the first eleven months of this year, approximately 62,000 customers offered feedback, which confirms, that CIG has an average customer satisfaction rating of 90 per cent. Since we introduced the *happy or not* terminals, some 645,470 customers have given their feedback with a customer satisfaction rating of 91 per cent. That is a world-class achievement, Mr. Speaker.

In 2021, MSU enhanced the kiosk function to also support qualitative feedback on why our customers read us favourably or unfavourably, so that we have more targeted data for departments to prioritise areas for business improvements.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to highlight some of the comments received from customers who visited the Department of Vehicle and Driver's Licencing (DVDL) in:

West Bay: *I was so impressed with the new system and relieved that I do not have to sit for hours waiting anymore. Really efficient. The customer service staff are awesome and very helpful. Everything went smoothly. Thanks.*

Breakers: *The agent was very helpful and knew his job properly. Very pleasant and charismatic.*

George Town: *Overall, from the inspection and staff, to the quick timing of processing the paperwork, paying and done. Everyone was very pleasant to deal with. Thank you.*

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you a bad one—I want to be fair. A person said: *I came to pick up the sticker for my new vehicle licence that I bought online. [The] advertisement says, if you pay online you do not have to wait, but I waited an hour and 20 minutes.* So, Mr. Speaker, we have some work to do; we are not perfect, but we are making some great headways in our performance.

Mr. Speaker, an MSU advisor worked very closely with the Ministry and the team at DVDL to improve customer satisfaction. Mr. Speaker, I was a customer a few months ago at the DVDL; I was able to get my car licenced online in nine minutes. That is a world class performance, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank POCS, the DVDL and the Ministry responsible, for achieving these outstanding results.

Mr. Speaker, the team developed and launched the CIG customer service pledge and provided supporting materials to heads of departments rolling out this pledge within their agencies. For the first-time ever on such scale, MSU has deployed a 360-degree feedback tool and procured hundreds of hours of coaching to approximately 300 senior leaders and middle managers. This work gives senior leaders a safe place to receive feedback and to develop personal objectives for how to improve their individual leadership effectiveness.

This team has also led work to establish a draft professional competency framework and development pathways for both the HR and policy professions, which will be formally adopted in 2022.

The team has contributed to Cayman's battle against COVID by supporting the work of the National Emergency Operations Committee (NEOC) in 2020 and the work of Public Health in 2021. Two members of the team have been embedded in the past year at Workforce Opportunities & Residency Cayman (WORC) as the Acting Director; and in Judicial Administration as the Acting HR Manager.

At the request of the Deputy Governor, support has been provided to strengthening communities. MSU provided leadership and framework for collaboration across 10 agencies, to support the collection of derelict and abandoned vehicles littering Cayman's roadsides and residential communities.

The team launched a temporary CIG Call Centre in 2020 to ensure that calls coming into CIG entities were answered. The call centre reduced abandoned calls from 25 per cent to only 6 per cent, by the time it was stood down and the function could again be absorbed into normal business activities.

In the coming budget period, Mr. Speaker, MSU will lead work to establish a self-assessment instrument to support the embedding of competency framework, and develop pathways for the policy profession. It will develop a framework for measuring key performance indicators, thus driving performance improvement at the department level.

It will expand WORC to facilitate leadership development by extending 360-degree feedback to a wider set of CIG people leaders. The POCS project management team continues to roll out the key technology transformational HR Programme and the support portfolio planning of other projects that are assigned to POCS.

The PMO team also contributes to the development of CIG's wider project management capabilities by being involved in the recruitment and monitoring of future project managers. The key achievements in this budget period have been to support various COVID-19 projects, including assisting with the procurement of the HR management system that I spoke of earlier, not just for CIG but also for another SAGC, which is anticipated to save that entity as much as \$1 million over five years.

Mr. Speaker, we are working closely across the entire public sector to ensure economies of scale and ensure that we have a joint approach.

Our procurement projects include:

- the Geo-fencing technology needed to allow for monitoring home isolation;
- implementation of the technology that supports take up of remote working;
- the distribution of HR policies across the public sector; and
- the redeployment of civil servants doing lockdown or periods of emergency.

The programme management team includes a Caymanian Project Support Officer and a Seconded Caymanian Project Manager. The team also supported recruitment efforts for project managers within e-government and the Ministry of Employment and Border Control.

Office of Education Standards

Mr. Speaker, I am turning now to the Office of Education Standards (OES), which is comprised of five staff—two Caymanians and three non-Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, you heard the Minister of Education say yesterday, that we made the Office of Education Standards an independent body away from the Ministry of Education. It was the right move to make; that has been a really good move, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister said, you cannot fix the problem unless you know that there is a problem and I think we are seeing great results, because of the work of the Office of the Education standards, but it is only possible with the Ministry's support, and we have gotten tremendous support from the Ministry. It has been a great team effort, everyone working together to make our schools better.

Currently, as 2021 draws to a close, 20 per cent of schools and early years are weak, Mr. Speaker, but there is only one government school that has been graded as "weak". Now, Mr. Speaker, we can say that that is a good thing, but we do not want any of our schools, not one, to be weak. This is an improvement of 5 per cent on the 2019 figures, and the OES believes that this will drop even further in 2022, leaving only a few persistent underperforming schools.

The remainder of judgments are distributed as follows:

- 52 per cent are currently satisfactory;
- 24 are good; and
- 4 are excellent.

Mr. Speaker, in my figures, I am talking about every school in the Cayman Islands—all of our schools. THE OES is responsible for the quality assurance of all educational institutions. There are 31 schools, 23 early-year centres, 7 higher education and numerous Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) providers.

The OES provides quality assurance to a physical inspection, monitoring and reporting of education institution performance. It employs the services of international overseas inspectors in order to bolster the workforce and ensure the agreed timelines of two-year inspection cycles are met.

Additionally, such staff enables us to remain current, internationally visible, and confident that a school assessed as "Good" in Cayman, carries the same assurance levels as a school within the same rating as London, New York and Dubai. That means, Mr. Speaker, that "Good" schools John Gray, the Lighthouse School and Layman Scott High School, are comparable to schools in London, New York and Dubai.

We should give our Ministry of Education a really resounding applause, Mr. Speaker; they have been doing a great job.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: The team has been historically small, and although slightly bigger now, it is [still] too small to fulfil its wider remit of assuring [the] quality of all educational institutions, therefore, it continues to prioritise the work of early years and schools.

Associate Inspector Programme

With its stakeholders, the OES will gradually build out to develop compliance and accreditation systems for both TVET and higher education over the coming years; [therefore,] building local capacity among prospective school inspectors is key. As more schools attain "Good" or "Excellent" ratings, more educators will qualify for the Associate Inspector Programme.

This is crucial, Mr. Speaker, as most schools have to limit how much time their most experienced educators can spend outside their respective schools participating in inspections. Broadening the local talent pool by training additional officers will ensure local teams can participate in the process, contribute to, and build Island capacity for inspections' delivery.

The aim is to demystify the inspections [by] boosting local educators' familiarity with the process, and their ability to support ongoing improvements when they return to their own schools.

This year, the OES started the second cycle of full inspections of early years' centres and schools, however, [due to] travel restrictions, frequent disruption to schools' schedules, and the additional safety protocols adopted by the OES to ensure our schools remain safe, this work has proven both costly and more time-consuming. To balance public health and to ensure value for money, the OES is being somewhat cautious in the early 2022 redeployment schedule, and will continue to dynamically assess the situation.

The Cayman Islands associate inspector training moved to the field training phase, with 10 newly-trained local staff working with international inspectors in a shadowing capacity.

Due to high levels of community transmission within schools, the OES was unable to complete the eight early years' centres inspections planned for November and December; however, as a result of the 18 full inspections that took place in 2021:

- Two early years' centres moved from Weak to Satisfactory;
- Two main-stream public schools moved from Satisfactory to Good for the first time;
- One private school moved from Good to Excellent, and
- No schools declined.

As a number of schools and early years' centres have been repeatedly judged as weak, as such, the OES has created a more-timely identification sys-

tem for serious incidents of notice or concern, that require immediate action, through additional follow-through-progress inspections.

A second cohort of potential local inspector candidates began their training in November and December, 2021.

Recognising the difficulties and pressures that schools are under, and the challenges reopening may bring, the OES, with its stakeholders' support, postponed the full inspections planned for January 2022, until September 2022. In the interim period, the OES will conduct a short thematic visits programme of all 31 schools from January 2022 to April 2022.

Thematic visits will examine and report on leadership and safety—particularly the well-being of students and staff—and full inspections, completing cycle two, will reconvene in September 2022 with the re-deployment of international inspectors alongside our locally trained team.

Disproportionately, the weakest element of Cayman Islands' education has been in the early years' sector; recognising this, OES will start the progress. This is the reason the Ministry of Education started Reception—because they saw how weak our early childhood learning was.

I am well aware of this, Mr. Speaker, because my wife works in this area and she comes home at the start of a school year and tells me, *oh I got a very lively bunch of students. I have my work cut out for me*; but at the end of the school year, Mr. Speaker, she comes home and brags about those students, about what a difference that early childhood reception class has made for them. Again, a big thank you to the Ministry of Education for addressing this urgent need; they listened to the concerns of the auditors and inspectors and have taken meaningful action.

In January 2022, they will create a bespoke inspection framework for early years' centres utilising local and international stakeholders. This will create an ability for owners and managers to self-evaluate and better align working practice to international standards, communicating with them in a more recognisable industry language. We should see the impact of this development when the cycle three inspections commence.

Early in 2022, we see the development of a new website providing better communication and access to the public and wider education stakeholders.

Looking forward in 2022, an inspection reference group will be set up, providing a committee-based forum for key senior leaders in public and private schools to share the strongest inspection-related practices both across the Islands and internationally.

Cycle 3 inspections will commence in September 2023 for all schools and early years' centres, with the roll out of a new early years' inspection framework.

A mainstream framework review is planned for early 2023. UCCI will have a pre-inspection familiarisa-

tion in 2022, with a view to join the full inspection schedule in 2023. Two stakeholder engagement activities for both higher education and technical and vocational training (TVET), are planned for 2022 and 2023,

It is clear that COVID-19 complicates the delivery and assessment of education. but I am happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that practical decisions are being taken, which take into consideration the well-being of students and educators. The Minister of Education and her team must be commended in this regard.

Much progress has been made in recent years to improve the calibre of learning and leadership available within the field of Education. By working collaboratively, the OES seeks to continue to build and enhance its frameworks; build on-Island capacity to participate in the inspection process; build confidence in the high ratings that are being achieved, and build student outcomes by preparing to resume the second cycle of full inspections, as soon as conditions allow.

The Civil Service College

Mr. Speaker, a fact that not many people know is that the Portfolio of the Civil Service is committed to building human capital at all levels.

Within our workforce, the Civil Service College was launched in 2007, providing learning and development opportunities across the Civil Service, and—Mr. Speaker you will love this—I was advised a few weeks ago that it is now the second largest provider of higher learning in the Cayman Islands. Wow, Mr. Speaker, who would have believed that distinction could be achieved by the Civil service?

There should be no doubt of the Civil Service's commitment to providing education and training to its staff. I know former Chief Secretary Mr. [George A.] McCarthy, who championed the college's creation, would be very proud today.

The Civil Service College is aligned to the Civil Service's core competencies of building capability, provides two essential ingredients for organisational success:

- Firstly, it provides civil servants with the knowledge and skills they need to undertake their roles effectively, even when these roles are required to evolve to meet the new challenges arising within our community;
- Secondly, it ensures continual professional development and increases civil servants' ability to seize opportunities for progression and advancement.

Our budgets are limited and so we do not own any physical premises; instead, from first thing in the morning, until long after 5pm on many evenings, civil servants are taking classes from a single training room within the Government Administration Building, and utilising available training facilities across other Government offices.

The Civil Service College is a City and Guilds-accredited training provider regulated by the UK's Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OFQUAL). It is a small team of six, supplemented by associates and commercial arrangements, to deliver its annual performance.

The majority of this training is provided at zero cost to Ministries, core government departments or civil servants. By funding the full cost of the training reduces the inefficiency of duplicated budgeting and ensures civil servants in small and large departments have equal access to development.

Over the years, the Civil Service College has significantly increased its in-house delivery output capability, with over 150 civil servants achieving internationally-recognised Leadership and Management Qualifications during 2021.

This is having a direct impact on supporting the Civil Service to become more efficient and will ultimately result in improved services to our customers. Through education programmes and competency training delivered on its online learning platform, every civil servant has the opportunity to develop their skills at a time and place that is convenient to them. Online learning can be accessed from home at any time of the day, giving our employees maximum opportunities to up-skill themselves and to obtain promotion opportunities which in turn improves their quality of life.

The civil service delivers or otherwise sponsors eligible civil servants to take accredited courses. These are programmes and courses that are aligned to recognised qualifications with internationally recognised accreditation; examples include the Associate and Bachelor's degrees, and City and Guilds qualifications.

Profession-specific training for professional groups: This is support for our heads of profession who are responsible for topics including management, cyber-security, human resource management, procurement and finance.

Framework-linked training: This relates to formal framework such as our CIG core competency framework, human resource management competencies learning, and development competences.

Special courses: These includes programmes that includes skills for life, team development, and leadership and management continuous professional development.

The Civil Service College also delivers education to support advancement and progression of Caymanians within the Civil Service. This training is focused on our Caymanian Civil Servants who are not qualified to apply for progression or advancement because they are lacking specific academic qualifications. Programmes offered in this area include Skills for Life—a programme to build numeracy, literacy and to achieve pre-college qualifications.

The Associate Degree in Public Administration programme which is being transitioned to a broader degree programme offering, and City and Guilds Level Four Diploma in Professional Administration.

In the area of leadership and management training, the Civil Service College offers City and Guilds ILM II, which is a brand-new pilot programme in youth leadership being delivered in conjunction with the Clifton Hunter High School. This programme targets senior students who are in leadership positions such as prefects; it aims to get young Caymanians interested in leadership and management as a career choice, and give them knowledge and skills that will help them as they enter employment or progress their careers.

City and Guilds' ILM II, which is for inspiring managers; ILM III, which is mandated for all managers and supervisors; ILM VI, which is for senior managers; and ILM VII, for senior leaders.

The Civil Service College sponsored civil servants to participate in Leadership Cayman, which is run by the Chamber of Commerce.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the College sponsors quarterly senior leadership events where hundreds of senior leaders gather virtually or physically, to examine topical subjects and benefit from continuous professional development. The Civil Service College also facilitates CIG-mandatory training developed by the heads of the profession, such as anti-bullying and harassment, cyber security and the use of the CIGs finance management system.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will agree that the work being done across the Portfolio is having a positive impact, both within the civil service itself and across our community.

We are investing heavily in our workforce because the simple truth is, Mr. Speaker, that against all odds, civil servants deliver. That is not to say that we do not have persons who do not pull their weight; I understand that just yesterday, a caller complained to a social media site that the Civil Service does not fire anyone, and that civil servants are not performing to the high standard expected.

Mr. Speaker, we do have staff who do not perform to a high standard—tell me of an organisation where this is not true? However, I can say that poor performers are certainly the exception and such persons are being addressed. I appreciate that I do not come here and give an hour-long speech about the people who are not living up to the standards expected of a civil servant. I have specific reasons for not taking this approach:

- Firstly, these persons are in a very small minority and do not represent the average civil servant;
- Secondly, these persons are being addressed through performance management, but the primary objective of this process is to help people *improve* their performance, not to shame or castigate them;

- Thirdly, when all other efforts are exhausted, non-performing staff are being released with the strong message that perhaps they would be better suited in the private sector or some other environment most conducive to their interests and efforts levels.

Mr. Speaker, for obvious reasons, I am not going to come to Parliament with a naughty list—that's a job for Santa, not the Deputy Governor.

At all stages, even when a person is being disciplined, we will do our utmost best to treat that person with respect, and to remember that they are someone's daughter or son; mother or father; sister or brother, but we will not shy away from making the hard decisions that are necessary to ensure high performance.

Mr. Speaker, another criticism that has been levelled is that no one answers the phone.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there are more channels for accessing services than ever before. Services are offered in person and quite often, they are delivered online. Where services were initially disrupted at the start of the pandemic in 2020, the MSU stood up a dedicated call centre which remained in place until those departments were able to absorb that work back into their normal business processes.

Work is being done to optimise calling trees so that in busy transactional departments, emails and telephone calls go to multiple users rather than a single user. We are looking at how we can use management information to monitor performance and to provide targeted feedback. Each and every customer is valuable, and our interactions must better reflect this reality. Work has begun, and will continue until we get a more consistent outcome in this area.

Mr. Speaker, you heard the Minister of Education talk about chat boxes and other areas where we can work with our customers and that is something that we look to roll out across the service. Mr. Speaker, it is a real issue—I get too many complaints about that issue—but as always, we are not going to shove our heads in the sand and hope that these problems go away. We are going to address them. We are not going to make excuses; we are going to address them and we will get it right.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, given the tremendous work being done across the civil service, I know the Government, and in particular the Deputy Premier, is keen to roll out one-off performance incentives as rewards for persons who perform well. Again, Mr. Speaker, a thorough analysis has been done in this area with the pay and rewards report I spoke of.

These insights are helping us to address this opportunity in a way which can drive the right behaviours and build engagement. One improvement,

is the work underway to provide the new performance management tool, which allows goals to cascade from the organisation or department level more quickly across the entire organisation, allowing each person to start the year with sight of what is expected. These goals will be further expanded and can be agile in response to the priorities of the organisation.

It is important, when we offer performance incentives, that we can show the clear link between how an individual has performed and how they are ultimately rewarded. Teams are working to set the framework for this outcome both at a policy and system level, and I look forward to coming back to this honourable House to discuss our progress in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, it makes me incredibly grateful to see to support the Government has continued to provide to the civil service; in particular, the support of the Premier and the Deputy Premier, who have been steadfastly supporting and acknowledging the achievements of the men and women within the public service who deliver the policy priorities and to help make lives better.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank my entire leadership team for all their support and advice during the past two years. I want to thank the team in my office; the Attorney General; all of my colleagues in the Cabinet for their support during the last few months. I am blessed, Mr. Speaker, to be surrounded by a greatly talented team and they make my life a lot better.

Mr. Speaker, I stood before the Government on their first day in Office and I pledged the Civil Service's support and that we would work tirelessly to implement their policy priorities. Listening to the Ministers speak over the past week of their many achievements, after only a few months in Office, tells me that we are keeping our promise.

Mr. Speaker, I was moved by the Minister of Education's speech yesterday. She said many things, but one stayed with me—and she is absolutely right: *"When we work together, we are unmatched. We are one Government committed to making the lives of those we serve better."* We look forward to working with our elected leaders, making this purpose a reality over the next two years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and may God continue to bless these beloved Cayman Islands.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

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

The Honourable Premier.

**Ministry of Sustainability
and Climate Resiliency**

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

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to listen to the example of democracy on full display over this past week; and to listen to my Cabinet colleagues and their extremely capable and supportive Parliamentary Secretaries—they are a source of pride to me, Mr. Speaker. We knew that their task would be great as we face a very significant challenge, probably the biggest in our lifetime. And, Mr. Speaker, we all know that the difficulty we now face with reopening our economy, during these COVID circumstances, is quite significant.

I again want to congratulate all the Members who have spoken for their personal commitment, their ability to articulate their vision, and for understanding the concept of collective responsibility. There is no question that we have our work cut out for us, Mr. Speaker, but failure is not an option. Folding our hands; waving a white flag and surrendering, those are not options. Giving up is not in our DNA. Our people are standing behind us and have given us a mandate to work for them; to serve them; to lead and move this country forward in the face of great challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the Opposition Members' debate, and I want to pause for a moment and say—and I wish that all Opposition Members were present; but we have the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Members for George Town South and George Town West present and I am sure they can pass on the message.

Mr. Speaker, I believe I can speak for all Members of this Government, not just those of us that have had a long-standing relationship with those Members: We see them as colleagues in this honourable Parliament. We see them as fellow Caymanians representing our fellow Caymanians as well. As my friend and colleague, the Honourable Minister of Education said yesterday: This is one Cayman, we are one team, and we all have to succeed to represent our country and help take it forward.

They are not our enemies, Mr. Speaker. We may differ, we may have different opinions, we may have different perspectives on certain things, but they are not our enemies. They are our friends and we can disagree respectfully, but of course, Mr. Speaker, on occasion, when accusations or allegations are made, there will be a response.

Mr. Speaker, you, this country and this honourable House have heard the Opposition's view that there are many aspects of this budget that they can support, and they feel that it represents, as the Honourable Deputy Premier said, building on foundations that we did not lay; that is the way it should be, sir, and that is the way it is—but of course, there are things we are doing which are slightly different, bringing a slightly different focus, and I believe that is also what the people of this country expect, Mr. Speaker.

Government's handling of the COVID pandemic

Mr. Speaker, one matter that I was troubled by, in terms of comments from the other side, was the suggestion that the Government mismanaged our handling of the COVID pandemic. I do not think there is any doubt, and we have said so, that the previous Administration did a good job in 2020, handling what was a new threat that many of us may [not] have understood was possible.

Many of us may have been aware of the potential but, Mr. Speaker, most of us... I might not be wrong in saying none of us, ever expected to see and confront a pandemic scenario in our lifetimes; but they did a good job handling that. Locking down, keeping the country safe when there were no other options. There were no vaccines; there was no medication; there were no therapeutics that exist today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, we have also said, that compared to locking down reopening is a much more difficult task, and we will have many differences of opinion. Many people would want things to be done the way they want and many demands will be made; we have got to chart a path which effectively generates the least number of complaints and maximises the level of safety and protection of our population, while also trying to restore livelihoods. We are looking to protect lives and promote livelihoods, Mr. Speaker.

Here are the circumstances: The same advisors that the previous Government had in relation to locking down are the same advisors that this Government has in relation to reopening. The same advisors, so, unless you can point out that this Government has ignored the public health/medical advice, and gone ahead and done something which represents a threat to public health and the lives of our people, then you have no basis for saying that we have mismanaged the reopening.

Mr. Speaker, the previous Government's manifesto basically said as a top priority: **"As we immunise the majority of our residents, we will begin to reduce the quarantine period until we can open up fully and safely."** That is what it said, sir. Clearly, they were contemplating immunisation through the vaccine; contemplating reducing the quarantine period; and then opening up in a way which was regarded as, I guess, relatively safe.

Mr. Speaker, we have been beaten to pieces by the machinery, those operatives who are against the Government, commenting about our position that we were reopening safely, but here we have the same wording, same perspective, same proposed approach.

On 15th June there was a press conference by our Opposition friends, who at that time basically said, [that] reopening should be the 1st September and quarantine should be removed.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Now, Mr. Speaker, at that time our proposal for re-opening was the 9th September which was after the start of the school year. That was the rationale behind that.

Of course, we were also heavily pushing vaccination as well; and I want to say that, in particular the Member for Red Bay, did say that we had set ourselves a target of 80 per cent and we achieved something that he never thought we would achieve. We can take that as a compliment.

That is certainly something that we pride ourselves on, Mr. Speaker, because we pushed that in full faith that the vaccines were going to be our best tool, our best option, to help save the lives of our people because, no matter how you cut it, when we dropped the quarantine and effectively reopened the borders, we were letting COVID back into the community. That was going to happen.

Put aside the fact that we had a community outbreak earlier than anticipated, but that was going to happen, so I think our experience has proven us right to rely on the vaccines.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Let us not forget, Mr. Speaker that we did not just hold ourselves to a target of 80 per cent of the previous assumed population number of 65,000. We set a new assumed population number of 71,000 and we used the 80 per cent of that as our target, so we gave ourselves a stretched target to achieve, to maximise the safety of our people, Mr. Speaker. To maximise the safety of our people in circumstances where we knew [that] eventually, no matter how it came about, COVID was going to be back in the community. Mr. Speaker, doing something like that is not a reflection of a reckless Government; it is not a reflection of a Government that does not care about its people; it is not a reflection of a Government that is taking unnecessary chances. It is not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at that Press Conference on the 15th, I think it was the Member for George Town North said, "I do not think you can sit and wait to see if another variant comes out before you set an opening day." [UN-VERIFIED]

The Member for Red Bay also said at that time, and in my view accurately, at least the first leg of it, "We cannot continue living in a cocoon. There is going to be very little risk of COVID-19 taking hold in the community with that level of vaccination..."—which was in his view, a target of 75 to 80 per cent—"...and with the additional protection that those who come to visit must be vaccinated or they do the full 14 days in quarantine." [UN-VERIFIED]. Now the full 14 days, obviously, would be for those people who were unvaccinated but who otherwise qualified to come back into the country. So Mr. Speaker, that was the Member for Red Bay's saying

and I am going to repeat it, because yesterday he said that the Government was reckless; [that] the Government has handled the COVID pandemic badly, and made mistakes.

Now, none of us are going to claim that we do everything perfectly, but one thing we can say, Mr. Speaker, is [that] what he said yesterday is in complete contravention of this aspect of his statement that he made on June 15th, which is: *there is going to be very little risk of COVID-19 taking hold in the community with that level of vaccination*; because he was saying yesterday that COVID-19 had these significant levels of local transmission and that the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) put us at level 4 for community transmission and issued a travel warning.

Mr. Speaker, certainly on 15th June he was predicting and thinking, *"There is little risk of COVID-19 taking hold in the community with a high vaccination rate."*, but, Mr. Speaker, we have learned that that was not correct. We had an outbreak in early September and the comments Mr. Speaker, were that, *"That outbreak was a result of us taking chances and it was as a result of us reducing the quarantine period."*

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Red Bay—and I am not picking on the Member for Red Bay, it is just that he had the most to say about it so that is what I am responding to, sir. The Member for Red Bay in many of his postings effectively said that the quarantine period should be a minimum of 14 days, that was what the science demanded, and that there was nothing which supported a quarantine period below 14 days.

In fact, he even argued that it really should have been 21 days, but, Mr. Speaker, consistent with the manifesto priority of *"as we immunise the majority of our residents we will begin to reduce the quarantine period until we can open up fully and safely"*, in December of 2020 when the Member for Red Bay was the Premier, he supported the reduction of the quarantine period to 10 days.

Now, I am sure the Government at that time were acting on best advice from the same public health people. The same Chief Medical Officer and the same cadre of senior Caymanian doctors that we use today said, *ten days is okay*, and, Mr. Speaker, the same ones told us that five days was okay as well. I mean, there was recognition that it was a very slight uptick in risk, but that was the advice; and also, Mr. Speaker, we were not in the same position. This was not December 2020, when we lowered the quarantine to five days for fully vaccinated people coming back into the country. At that time, they had to have a reason—they had to be Caymanians; they had to be residents; they had to have property or businesses here. They had to have a reason. Could not just be a tourist.

So, Mr. Speaker, the five days was the advice, five days was what we put in place at a time when we had six/seven months, I think, of ongoing vaccinations. Ten days was put in place prior to the vaccinations. Vaccinations began in January, so, Mr. Speaker, we

had made a lot of progress; we had pushed through and gotten the vaccinations to quite a high level, and the advice was [to] lower this to five days.

Mr. Speaker, we realised, I think it was early September, that we were having a community outbreak. The fact that we were having this community outbreak was obviously a concern and we needed to have an idea what was causing it. All of the testing that was done in relation to that initial outbreak period, none of those tests; none of those people that were found positive at that time had any connection to travellers. None. Not known, I should say; and around that time, we had a situation where there were reports of people breaching quarantine, so we think that is how it came about, Mr. Speaker. We think it came about by an unlawful breach of quarantine not by somebody coming out, but by somebody going in to the quarantine envelope—in other words visiting a traveller who was in quarantine. We think that is how it happened, Mr. Speaker, but you know, we had 14 months and to be honest, most of the medical doctors were sitting there saying to us, *“We are surprised it lasted this long; we are really surprised it lasted this long,”* because it is difficult for human beings do not get to a point where they suffer from complacency and make mistakes, and we think that is what happened, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Red Bay also said during that 15th June press conference, *“If we were in Government, we would have announced the date four weeks ago”*, so effectively, he was saying from back on May 14, if they were the Government, they would have announced a reopening date. How would that have been possible, Mr. Speaker, when the reality was that we came into office the end of April, and spent a couple of weeks being acclimatised; talking to everybody to understand what was going on, and I spent time talking to the Honourable Deputy Governor—who just delivered some excellent remarks outlining the exceptional work and reputation of our civil service—to find out that no plans had been made or work done, to prepare for a reopening strategy. Not even any baseline work or benchmark work. Nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I am not blaming any particular person; that is just an observation. It is a fact. This Government and the Programme Board, the civil servants involved, the wider public service involved, were starting to prepare at that point. To prepare for a very important thing, Mr. Speaker, and that was eventually where we would get to with our reopening and we made those announcements; we adopted the re-opening plan, we did it all in good faith, we did it all with the understanding that we were going to be ready.

However, Mr. Speaker, the truth is, we did not know what we did not know, and when we had the first outbreak in September we started to experience reality and rather than being reckless and continuing, we did what was responsible; we paused. We paused Phase 4 because we knew we needed time to assess what we were seeing in front of us. The community needed time

to adjust to the reality of COVID, because we had spent a number of press conferences talking and media appearances talking about the reality of COVID in the community but until you feel it and until you see it, Mr. Speaker, people do not get grasp the reality.

Mr. Speaker, I think what I simply want to say is that it is unfair for anybody to suggest that this Government was reckless or made any mistakes in relation to COVID that were unwarranted; that were unexpected; that were you know, anything resembling negligence.

Like I said, anybody can make mistakes, but I do not see any specific mistakes that anybody can point to in relation to this, Mr. Speaker. As we have said often, there is no playbook for this. We are doing our best. We are all working together.

I want to single out the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, for graciously agreeing to participate on one occasion in a videoed discussion to promote vaccination. That is the way we should be working together, Mr. Speaker, and if anybody on the other side has more gravitas, more credibility, more subject matter expertise, and is viewed perhaps in his or her own mind as being an expert, then I would absolutely welcome them participating in any discussions. They do not have to talk with us, they can go out there and do it on their own, sir. They can promote vaccines; they can promote the public health protocols, if that is the case, sir.

Mr. Speaker, the other...

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, we have reached the hour of interruption.

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

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

I move the Suspension of Standing Order 10(2) that the business of the House can continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order for the House to continue its business after the hour of 4:30pm.

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

Ayes.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

The Standing Order has been suspended. Honourable Premier continuing.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to comment on the Member for Red Bay's comments in relation to the impact on tourism, as he said, Mr. Speaker that having this high rate of community transmission was going to

have a very negative impact on our tourism industry and the ability to attract people to come here.

Mr. Speaker, I want to advise the country that we did not just pick dates. We did not move ahead at certain points in time without taking advice not just from Public Health, the Chief Medical Officer or the Medical Officer of Health, but a cadre of very senior local doctors as well who all told us to go ahead. Their recommendation was to go ahead despite the community outbreak earlier in the year. We paused because we felt we needed to be much more cautious, again, not reflective of any basis for suggesting that we were being reckless. We felt we had to be cautious and conservative. These doctors also advised us to go ahead—that we could and should go ahead—because they did not see a better point in time with the November 20th opening date as well.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that since opening on November 20th, we have had thousands of tourists come in. Of course, we are not going to have 20,000 or 40,000, but we are moving in that direction. You have to start basically at zero on day one, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that we have had a lot of interest is reflected in the fact that we have had some difficulties keeping up with the Travel Cayman process. I think the Honourable Deputy Premier will probably speak to that process by way of clarification, but that has been significantly improved and the difficulties that may have been experienced over the last 10 days have been significantly addressed. I believe a manual approval of vaccination details that used to take 20 minutes is now down to about two or three minutes because of a change in process, so we are making significant improvements there.

Mr. Speaker, we understand what the tourism industry requires. We understand what business requires. Mr. Speaker, I spent four years with my friends on the other side—2013 to 2017—and they know how I think. They know the way I see things. Perhaps there are certain aspects of things that they might not agree with me on, but they know I understand business. They know I came from the business world, so to suggest that we are blind to the realities of what the tourism industry requires is inaccurate and unfair.

Mr. Speaker, this is about getting the balance right. This is about balancing lives and getting the process right to unlocking stages, just like they unlocked from the full lockdown process last year and did it in stages, two or three weeks to see what the outcome is. That is the same advice we are getting in relation to going through our phases, except that the recommendation is four or five weeks because now we are taking additional risks.

Yes, there are going to be people in the tourism industry who feel that we should just immediately go to Phase five and allow unvaccinated children to come in, and if that is what the Member for Red Bay was suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that is incredible; because on the

one hand, he is suggesting that we have high community transmission and that is at the fault of the Government and we are irresponsible; and on the other hand, he is saying take additional risk, let people come in with [children] who cannot get vaccinated—in Cayman, because we do not have the option open to us and in the UK because they have not decided to do it there yet either—and allow children to come in.

Now we do have some American children that are able to get vaccinations and they are able to come in as fully vaccinated but until they are vaccinated, Mr. Speaker, they are regarded as excellent vectors and they can spread the virus very easily. The advice we have had and the action we have taken, is that we should not take on additional risk at this point in time. We should wait a few weeks to see what is happening. That is the approach we are taking. That is the advice we have been given that is regarded as the safest approach.

Again, that does not reflect a Government that is mishandling anything or not understanding the risk—either to business or to public safety. We absolutely understand both, Mr. Speaker, and we are moving as quickly as we safely can in order to accommodate both.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on from that issue except that I want to encourage people.

Most of our population has been vaccinated Mr. Speaker. The booster programme has been going well; for last week and this week I think, it is now available to persons 30 years old and older who have had their vaccination for more than three months. As of next week, it is going to persons or adults who are 18 years or older and who have had their full course of vaccinations—their first two shots—for more than three months.

Now, Mr. Speaker that is no accident, that is in response to the risk of this new variant which has been discovered; originally thought to be from South Africa or neighbouring countries, now we are finding out that it was in parts of Europe before it was even announced to have been identified in South Africa. That, Mr. Speaker, reflects another determined approach by this Government to try to keep the people of this country safe. To keep them safe, to try to balance lives and livelihoods, to continue moving forward with reopening as safely as possible, and encouraging people to get their booster shots; encouraging those who have not been vaccinated to get vaccinated. It saves lives, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the last week, maybe a little bit more than that I believe, we have had declining numbers of people in hospital. Consistently, we have seen around 80 per cent, sometimes 85 per cent, sometimes as high as 90 per cent of the people who are in hospital are unvaccinated. For the last few days, I believe I am right in saying, that while our hospitalisation numbers continue to go down, I think it is around 10 or 12 now. For the last few days, Mr. Speaker, 100 per cent of the people in hospital have been unvaccinated.

Mr. Speaker, I wear my emotions on my sleeve as they say, so when I beg people to go and get vaccinated it is not because I am trying to tick a box; it is not because I am trying to sound responsible; it is because I care and this Government cares about their safety.

Mr. Speaker, we recently had the first death, which I think people will say and agree, reflects what someone may call, a real COVID death. Somebody who, but for COVID, probably would not have died. Somebody who was very sick; and for me, Mr. Speaker it unfortunately hit very, very close to home, because this person—and it is pretty much public knowledge now—was my aunt, Mr. Speaker that I personally begged to go and get vaccinated. She was not my constituent; she was my aunt.

She was the constituent of my colleague, Ms. Heather Bodden in Savannah, and I begged her to stay on her as well. Her family begged her to get vaccinated. We had her surrounded by pleas to get vaccinated. It is hard. It is hard, Mr. Speaker, because I feel like I let her down because I feel like if I had done just a little bit more, she might still be here today. I feel like if I had done just a little bit more, her family would not be going through the pain that they are going through today. Vaccines work, Mr. Speaker. They absolutely work. The evidence of that is absolutely all around us.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking the right approach. We are being a responsible Government and we are trying to ensure that we are getting the balance right between lives and livelihoods. Today I am still getting messages from people begging us to shut down; absolutely begging us. Mr. Speaker, I want people to choose health and wellness and choose life. I want them to get vaccinated. I want them to do it for themselves; their family; the country.

Borrowing

Mr. Speaker, like my colleague the Honourable Minister for Financial Services, I found it difficult to track the case the Opposition was making [with] their comments on this budget.

On the one hand, there was what amounted to a vilification on certain issues; on the other hand, we were being praised for doing things that they wanted in their constituencies—praised for continuing things that the country obviously needs. For instance, they tell us that the budget puts us on the path of spending too much without sufficient revenue and that the budget needs to be trimmed. On the other hand, they demand that we increase the stipend paid to tourism workers. They said \$2,000 it should be; and then the Member for Red Bay said no, it should be \$2,500.

Mr. Speaker, the comments about the budget being too much and about borrowing and about the need to cut—*which one is it?* Are we to cut spending or are we to spend more? only when they say so.

The issue of borrowing \$350 million over two years suggests that a problem is partly right, and makes an assumption. We on this side know that we cannot continue borrowing; but we also know, Mr. Speaker, that unlike the representations made from the other side that you do not borrow to pay for operational expenses and recurring expenditure. That is not what we are doing. We are borrowing to fund capital, Mr. Speaker. And, I can tell you that the honourable Deputy Premier and I have said to our colleagues that we have got to manage this budget very well. [That] just because we have an amount in the budget does not mean we have to spend it—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: —Because it is a two-year budget and as we go along, if there are matters that are reflected in what is going on internally, as well as what is going on externally, we may have to make adjustments and we understand that. We understand it.

I took the same approach when I was in the last Government in 2013 to 2015. I supported a conservative approach in that respect. Nothing is going to change—I have not changed, Mr. Speaker. We all understand that we have to be careful with that; but, Mr. Speaker, I think is a bit rich for the Opposition to talk to us about borrowing, when they came to this House first and asked for a \$500 million borrowing authorisation, and then came back with a request.

The Speaker: Premier, it seems that we are having some technical difficulties with the television.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: It is up to you.

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

I understand there may be some difficulties within the building in relation to the television feed, but apparently and hopefully, externally it is continuing as it should.

[Inaudible interjections]

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

What I was saying, Mr. Speaker, was that the Opposition understood that the circumstances were such that there may be borrowing needed going forward, at least for a limited period of time, and they had a general authorisation which they then reflected in a specific negotiated line of credit of around \$330 million CI.

Mr. Speaker, the then Premier, in his State of the Nation Address delivered to this House on the 14th October 2020 said, “**We have also secured a \$403**

million line of credit which is before this House for approval in this meeting from a consortium of local banks should it be necessary. This is the prudent thing to do so that we can access favourable terms now, and do not go to the market in a weak position at the point of necessity."

He went on to say, Mr. Speaker, that as explained when it was announced, this arrangement was effectively an insurance policy but, Mr. Speaker, clearly it was within contemplation that borrowing may be necessary. Borrowing in itself is not a bad thing, Mr. Speaker, if you are not borrowing to cause difficulties for yourself.

Mr. Speaker, we are borrowing to pay for certain capital projects. We plan to manage the budget conservatively and ensure that as we move along, we keep track of everything that is happening, everything that is relevant—from a macro and a micro perspective—that would impact the Caymanian economy; and we are not going to have a reckless borrow-and-spend fiscal policy. That was the label he was suggesting, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess the Opposition's borrowing, had it come along and materialised, might have gone something like, *"a cunning acquisition of funds and the smartest deployment thereof ever"*, but borrowing is something that we feel we can do safely and we can remain within the requirements of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR), Mr. Speaker. In presenting the Appropriations Bill, the Honourable Deputy Premier has outlined very clearly that we are doing that, we are managing that.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a 2013 scenario. The debt that existed in 2013 because of the 2008 financial crisis was something around 16 per cent of Cayman's GDP at that time. While that in itself is not a high number, it was a very high number for Cayman so we—"we" meaning the Progressives' Government that I was a part of then—set about trying to reduce that and tightening our belt. Mr. Speaker, this Government is not afraid to tighten its belt as well, if it is necessary.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: We will do what we have to do to stay within the Public Finance and Management Act and the requirements of the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility, Mr. Speaker. We will absolutely do that.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed borrowing that we have set out in this budget amounts to about 8 or 9 per cent of the Cayman Islands' GDP. That is a significantly different position, for example, from the 2013 debt, which was 16 per cent or over 16 per cent of GDP, but it is still money that needs to be repaid, and I have complete confidence in the Deputy Premier—the Minister for Finance—the team in the Ministry of Finance and the Government as a whole, to manage the budget; to

generate economic activity; to continue growth in Cayman not just for growth's sake, Mr. Speaker. We have got to get all the other benefits along with it as well.

Sustainable development

I want to move on to some of my Ministry's matters, Mr. Speaker.

Members of this honourable House would be aware that this Government has recognised the urgent need for the Cayman Islands to take a more sustainable approach to our continued development, and that is not the throwaway comments I heard from Members on the other side. In particular, that we were going to stop development, et cetera—and again, I am not picking, but they are his words. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. We are not anti-development at all. We are pro-sustainable development; hence we are going to take a more sustainable approach to our continued development to ensure that we are embedding climate resiliency and sustainability in all of our policies and programmes. Our Government's commitment to taking action on these important issues is reflected in the establishment of my new Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency. This falls under Broad Outcome No. 5 in our Strategic Policy Statement - **Supporting climate change resilience and sustainable development.**

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important at this juncture to take a few minutes to outline what we mean when we refer to sustainable development. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development published *"Our Common Future"*—also referred to as *"The Brundtland Report"*—and they defined sustainable development as **"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."**

Mr. Speaker that means, and I do not know, this is in my head—I may have gotten it from somewhere, I am not taking credit for it—but what it means to me is that we are not entitled to just pursue our own prosperity today at the expense of the prosperity of our children tomorrow. We have to balance it, and I think we can do that, Mr. Speaker.

When discussing sustainable development, we also often hear references to the triple bottom line with the three independent pillars of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. This is sometimes referred to as people, planet and profit, and the importance of recognising their interconnectivity and the need to achieve a balance of benefits across these areas. This interconnectivity is further evidenced in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The SDGs, as they are often referred to, cover a broad range of issues and are intended to provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet now and into the future. I believe it is important to emphasise, Mr. Speaker that the SDGs

are not solely concerning the natural environment. Achieving sustainability requires action across all sectors.

Mr. Speaker, it may surprise some people to learn that the 17 SDGs include goals for good health and well-being, Ministry of Health and Wellness; quality education, Ministry of Education; gender equality, under my Ministry and the Cabinet Office; decent work and economic growth fits perfectly well within the Deputy Premier's Economic Development and Labour. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure as well. Those two gentlemen sitting side by side near the end, both of them called Minister Ebanks, the Ebanks twins. Mr. Speaker, you have heard both of them speak very eloquently, clearly and passionately about what they want to achieve: peace, justice and strong institutions—all of the safety and fairness that we want to see reflected in society.

Sustainable development is a concept that is wide-reaching and future-focused, and I believe it is an extremely beneficial approach to assessing everything that we do, collectively and individually, in our day to day lives. The PACT-Government believes our decisions must weigh the benefits and impacts for the present and future generations; and while we make decisions to improve the ability of our future generations to meet their own needs, I recognise that many of us may not be around to enjoy those benefits.

Mr. Speaker, you remember the Deputy Premier's comments about foundations and he also talked about planting trees whose shade we will never sit under.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: You mentioned it during your contribution to the debate.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders: I stole that from you.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Okay, well, I am borrowing it back.

Mr. Speaker, we should not and cannot be afraid of making those decisions. My colleagues and I believe there is an urgent need to better coordinate our physical and economic development with the preservation of our natural and cultural heritage and applying a sustainability lens to our decision-making and policy action is essential to helping us achieve that much-needed balance and coordination.

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations' sustainable development goals are not new. They have been around for some time; however, I believe we have failed to embrace them in a meaningful way—and, Mr.

Speaker, we now see the world adopting them. Businesses around the world are adopting the SDGs as well, as a part of their mission and their values, so it is not just political bodies.

It is not just countries and geopolitical regions. It is what is required; the private sector, the business sector, government—we all have to be doing it, Mr. Speaker. This Government believes that we have an opportunity to weave this into everything that we do, but we also believe we have to do it urgently, as we do not have time to lose. We are in a low-lying country, Mr. Speaker, and the impacts of climate change will be significant.

The need to weave-in a sustainable approach is essential for us, Mr. Speaker. So to embed the SDGs and a more sustainable future into the government's work, my Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency will be tasked with coordinating the consultation for, and subsequent development of, a sustainability framework based on the UN's SDGs and aligned with our Government's broad outcomes.

This framework will help us formalise the mechanisms for the Cayman Islands' continued progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, Mr. Speaker. It is envisioned that the new sustainability framework will operate across government, and act as a touch-stone for all that we do as a Government, helping us to maintain our future focus and acting as an additional reminder of our responsibilities to future generations.

Mr. Speaker, part of protecting our future requires that we take action now to enhance our climate change resiliency, and urgently take steps to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. This is not something that is just shared by this Government, sir. This has become a central feature of discussion for all countries in the region and all CARICOM countries in the Caribbean region as well. *Mr. Speaker, part of protecting our future requires that we take action now to enhance our climate change resiliency and urgently take steps to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.* Worth repeating.

While our local contribution to climate change has been, as we all know, Mr. Speaker, fairly negligible on a relative basis, we still have a responsibility to act to reduce that contribution. It is not acceptable for us to simply shrug our shoulders and say, *"We did not contribute much, so we do not have to do anything."* Every action by every individual can make a difference, Mr. Speaker, and I believe, if we are in a position where we are to take part in any international funding, in respect of climate change mitigation, we are going to be required to show that we are doing our part too.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must also recognise that we no longer have the luxury of time. A quick review of the daily regional and global news headlines reflects flooding, forest fires, coastal landslides, an increased forecast of stronger storms,

predictions of a rise in sea-level. All of these are predicted impacts of human-induced climate change, Mr. Speaker, already manifesting themselves with increasing frequency and severity. The Caribbean and other small Island States are already feeling this; we are already seeing examples of drought and changing rainfall patterns that are occurring even in our region, and we will disproportionately bear the impacts of these changes despite having contributed little to the problem.

As the Secretary General of the United Nations put it, we are on the edge of an abyss and we are moving in the wrong direction. There is a need a need for global action not only in the area of emission reductions, but also in the area of funding to support adaptation and mitigation. Those who have contributed the most to creating this problem should also contribute the most to the cost of helping to address it. How and whether that will be achieved, unfortunately, remains to be seen.

Mr. Speaker, having attended (and attempted, I guess, to make a difference there) COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland and listening to my friend, Barbados' Prime Minister Mia Mottley, speak very powerfully and eloquently about the need for the promised funding to be delivered to countries to begin their mitigation strategies, it is very clear that:

1. We must have that; but
2. We may not be able to count on it.

So, we have got to do some things to help ourselves, Mr. Speaker; we must take bold action now so I would like to outline some of our plans for the upcoming budget period.

The operational budget for the Ministry over the two-year period is \$34 million, which includes a proposed expenditure operational budget of \$16.4 million in 2022 and \$17.6 million in 2023. Other operational executive expenditure, included within this total overall in the same period, is \$5.3 million comprised of \$2.5 million in 2022 and \$2.8 million in 2023 and includes funding to support sustainability projects and programmes in the community, plans to increase efficiency in public sector buildings and community support to improve sustainability in homes across the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, the capital investment for the Ministry over the next few years is projected to be approximately \$61 million, comprised of \$35 million in 2022 and \$26 million in 2023. This expenditure includes \$24 million relating to infrastructure development in relation to the ReGen project; some benefits of this milestone project will be waste reduction, energy recovery and sustainability, with a long-lasting positive impact on our environment.

Mr. Speaker, we have also included \$21 million in an effort to address the ongoing issue of beach erosion that is impacting our Islands, specifically along Seven Mile Beach. Mr. Speaker, that is a good example of the challenges we face, the outcomes that

will occur, and the damage to our national assets in some of our best biggest industries if we just ignore these issues. We are having to budget potentially to spend \$21 million to do beach re-nourishment because of excess erosion aggravated by too much development in the active beach zone on Seven Mile Beach—our national asset, Mr. Speaker. That is another good example of the fact that if we do not start doing something about the problems today, the problems tomorrow are going to cost a heck of a lot more to address.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Mr. Speaker, I have this amount in my budget but to be honest, I will probably end up transferring it to the Ministry of Tourism, because that is where the significant benefit to a project like this is; and yes, for anybody listening, we do intend to ask for contributions to the costs in addressing these issues; because you cannot have the benefit of living on the edge of paradise and not expect to contribute to some of the problems caused by the kind of activities carried out and the way development has occurred there. It is something we must do, Mr. Speaker.

Seven Mile Beach is a major, major asset of this country. If we lose it, it is not going to be a loss just to the tourism industry. It is going to be a loss to our culture. We are going to feel that in our soul, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: In addition to the customary capital requests for operational equipment such as vehicles, boats, and computers, we will also be funding the ongoing remediation work at the George Town Landfill; the National Weather Service's new headquarters in Grand Cayman; the expansion of the automatic weather observation system; a Cayman Brac workshop for the Department of Environment, and renovations to their offices in Grand Cayman.

National Energy Policy 5-Year Review

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on to the National Energy Policy which is due for its five-Year review; this will allow the policy to be reviewed with the benefit of the changes that we have seen in renewable energy and other associated areas.

Mr. Speaker that policy had an aspiration of achieving 70 per cent renewable energy by 2037—70 per cent; and right now, we are somewhere around 3 per cent, so obviously, Mr. Speaker, a lot of work is required. We have put in place new members at the National Energy Policy Council, and I believe they will be able to drive that forward with vigour. When I discussed this with my colleagues, I made the mistake of saying

“with energy”, and I got a few laughs about the pun, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the 2011 *Draft* National Climate Change Policy and Strategy has never been adopted, sir. That needs to be dusted off, reviewed, and updated and the process has already been initiated with the commencement of a Climate Change Risk Assessment being undertaken by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (CEFAS), which is a UK entity. That assessment is being fully funded by the Governor’s Office with our grateful acknowledgement and thanks. It will help to inform the review and update the Climate Change Policy and will also include a stakeholder workshop in mid-2022 to prioritise the risks identified in the first phase of the work. A final report on the risk assessment is due in September 2022.

National Development Plan

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry will collaborate with [both] the Ministry and the Department of Planning to progress the long-overdue review of the National Development Plan. The Member for George Town North indicated in his contribution to the Budget Debate that he hoped this would take on board some of the work done previously with Plan Cayman and I think, Mr. Speaker, that it reflects the reality. We will be taking into account the work done there.

Mr. Speaker, this enhanced cross-agency collaboration is indicative of the approach that I believe will become the hallmark of this Government, and is essential to creating a legacy of sustainability that we can plan to create. This level of collaboration is already evident in our cross-agency work in the area of beach erosion which will continue into the upcoming budget period.

Mr. Speaker, I believe we will see further examples of the Ministry working in collaboration on other important areas, such as addressing concerns around single-use plastics, and improving the energy efficiency of government buildings; and in the area of single-use plastics, I am certainly grateful to have our new colleague, the honourable Dwayne Seymour—

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: —who was the Minister in the last Government, dealing with the issue of single-use plastics. So I will be seeking any additional support that you can provide in respect to this, sir?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: There you go. That is just another example of the additional issues that you will be involved with, not just the three areas that we previously discussed.

The National Weather Service

Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming budget period the National Weather Service will continue to increase its capacity with new Meteorological Observer Trainee posts in 2022, and Meteorological Forecaster Trainee posts in 2023—the same difficult word to pronounce, slightly different roles, but all opportunities for young Caymanians who are interested in this area.

This will allow the Weather Service to increase its level of service to all of its stakeholders with a particular focus on the need to increase services to aviation as a part of supporting our international airports. The regulators these days insist that we need to move towards having, either full 24-hour coverage or as close to it as possible.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands

Hazard Management Cayman Islands (HMCI) will be strengthening its ability in the area of business continuity planning using an all-hazards approach through the addition of new staff. HMCI will also work to further expand its emergency notification system and undertake a risk analysis consultancy for tsunami wave run-up models, improved storm surge analysis, and ground-speed acceleration data for earthquakes. I remember there was a time, Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, when one would have wondered why on earth we were doing this work for earthquakes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Tsunamis are thankfully rare around here, but I do not want to think *[inaudible]*.

Mr. Speaker, a local flood sensor network is planned as well as work to increase shelter capacities; and that is ongoing, Mr. Speaker.

The HMCI will expand its training on all three Islands in areas including oil spill response, incident command systems, mass casualty management, mass evacuation planning, and the Community Emergency Response Team Certifications or CERT, Mr. Speaker. That is one particular programme that I want to encourage all Members of this honourable House to try to have established across their various constituencies, in terms of as many teams [and] as much coverage as possible.

Department of Environment

The team at the Department of Environment (DOE) also has ambitious plans for the upcoming budget period. In addition to providing technical support to the Ministry on several of our projects, the DOE will continue to provide support to the important work of the National Conservation Council, as it fulfils its mandate

on the National Conservation Act. This includes managing the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) process, including the ongoing EIAs for the integrated solid waste management system and the proposed East-West Arterial Road project, which is finally under way in terms of the assessments. The DOE will also work with the National Conservation Council to further expand the national terrestrial system of protected areas.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that by working collaboratively across government, in partnership with the community and the private sector, we have an opportunity to shape a sustainable future for the Cayman Islands. We have ambitious plans, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the many members of our hardworking civil service and my Ministry team who have been involved. I admire their passion, commitment and determination.

Mr. Speaker, as economist Kate Raworth noted in her book, *"Doughnut Economics"*: *"Ours is the first generation to deeply understand the damage we have been doing to our planetary household and probably the last generation with the chance to do something transformative about it."* [UNVERIFIED] That sounds very similar, Mr. Speaker, to a quote which I heard from no less than [former] United States President Obama advocating the same principles.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: You know... I do not know.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that we now have no Opposition Members present, but I do think we have a quorum—we can continue...

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I do not know what I would have done to drive them off, Mr. Speaker, but I will wrap this up because I would like to allow my colleague, the Minister for Finance and Deputy Premier, to get to his winding up as well.

First Caymanian Helicopter pilot

There is [much] that I want to speak about in relation to the police, which from a budget perspective falls under my Ministry, but I am going to address that in another way at another time, sir, except that I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) is proud to announce that our first Caymanian helicopter pilot will join the Air Operations Unit in 2022.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I gratefully acknowledge the presence of the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this development is one that all Caymanians can be proud of. I know it is something that has been going on; this young man's attempts to accomplish this has been going on for probably eight years now, but finally, this coming year, it is going to be a reality and it is one that all Caymanians can celebrate.

The RCIPS are also continuing with perhaps as many as two major recruitment drives for the next fiscal year, and they expect about 20 new Caymanian recruits in January of 2022, Mr. Speaker.

Cayman Islands Coast Guard

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the Coast Guard because that is an organisation that I have looked at with immense pride as a Caymanian, sir.

I recommended it previously—I hope that Government Information Services (GIS), or some other media house, will go down and video their process in the morning, which I think is called Raising of the Colours. *Does that sound right?* It is when they raise the flag and while playing the National Anthem. When you see those officers doing that with such precision and reverence at about 8:00 in the morning...

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I will tell every Member of this House and every person listening to my voice, you will have goose bumps observing that, Mr. Speaker. They are Caymanians that you can be absolutely proud of.

Mr. Speaker, over the next two years, the Cayman Islands Coast Guard will seek to enhance the maritime safety and security of our Islands through the continued development and delivery of professional coast-guard services.

Since January 2021, the Cayman Islands Coast Guard has embarked on a series of activities intended to not only increase its staffing complement, but also to enhance its operational capability and capacity. This first began with the recruitment of 16 young Caymanians between the ages of 18 and 33—6 female and 10 males; and as I said before, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you: When you see those officers, whether they are male or female, when you see them going about their duties with discipline and precision, you cannot help but be so immensely proud of them.

The activities continue with the delivery of a Junior Leader and Transition course intended to standardise practices and procedures, while improving knowledge and proficiency in the areas of leadership and development of new and junior non-commissioned officers. International collision avoidance regulations; International Bridge watch-keeping standards; methods of instruction; incident command systems; Naval

customs and traditions, and search and rescue coordination.

Mr. Speaker, with the enactment of the Coast Guard Act a couple of months ago, and recognising that the previous Government completed the drafting of the Coast Guard Act, comes the full responsibility of meeting its local and international obligations to provide a 24-hour search and rescue service and a maritime patrol presence to detect and disrupt the various forms of illicit maritime activity occurring around our Islands.

To meet these obligations, the Cayman Islands Coast Guard will, over the next 24-months, with the funding approved by the Government, build in the following areas: They will continue to recruit young, committed Caymanians to help fill various vacancies that exist in both the junior non-commissioned (NCO) and commissioned officers' ranks, some of which will include boat crew members, electrical and mechanical technicians, search and rescue coordinators and maritime law enforcement specialists.

Mr. Speaker, understanding that there is a difference between the roles and functions of a commission and non-commission officer, the Coast Guard will commence both the necessary academic and technical training needed to ensure that its commissioned officers are fully-qualified and properly able to lead and manage the various attachments of the Coast Guard.

At the same time, the Coast Guard will also seek to develop the capacity and capability of its non-commissioned officers by providing them with the requisite technical and vocational training and certification necessary to ensure that as they progress through the ranks, each NCO gains the necessary experience to not only become Cayman Islands Coast Guard subject matter experts, but also provide them with transferable skills and certifications that allow them to be qualified to take on various roles in the private sector—be it on board a fishing trawler or a mega-yacht.

Through partnerships with the Royal Navy, Her Majesty's (HM) Maritime and Coastguard Agency, the United States Coast Guard and the Caribbean Military Academy, the Cayman Islands Coast Guard intends to develop today's young Caymanians into tomorrow's leaders so that the training and experience garnered by its members will enable them to continue to be productive members of society, no matter what career path they eventually choose, sir.

Mr. Speaker, significant progress has been made with the modernisation of the fleet as well, with the acquisition of a multi-purpose patrol and response vessel capable of responding to vessels in distress in seas exceeding 14ft in height.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Not sure about that one; I think that might be 8ft, sir.

Our obligations relative to search and rescue response is also almost complete; however, there still

remains the need to procure a fit-for-purpose offshore patrol and response vessel capable of being deployed for up to 72 hours on a protracted search and rescue (SAR) deployment in foul weather, or an operation targeting persons or entities engaged in illicit maritime activity up to, or exceeding, 100 miles offshore. Considerable reach, Mr. Speaker, and believe me, with the level of professionalism that these officers and non-commissioned officers have, they will be a force to be feared in terms of interdiction.

Based on the unique nature of our operational environment this vessel will ideally be 80-100ft in length, and must be: Capable of safely navigating in relatively shallow water; and capable of assisting with the transport of supplies and personnel to and between the Sister Islands in times of natural disaster—especially when the use of conventional means is not immediately available.

Last, but by no means least, I am pleased to advise of our plans to establish the Coast Guard's Sister Island Detachment, which I know will please our Sister Islands' Members. Once fully equipped and operational, it will deploy out of Cayman Brac and provide the maritime safety and security presence long requested by residents of the Sister Islands.

Mr. Speaker, [because of] the need to ensure the safety of persons using our maritime environment for both private and commercial recreational activity, over the next 24 months the Coast Guard will engage in activities that will see them working with the Port Authority, the Maritime Authority, and the Department of Environment to introduce regulations that will ensure this is accomplished.

They will also undertake public awareness campaigns designed to educate boat operators on the new safety regulations being introduced and enforce these regulations, especially those regarding operating vessels while under the influence of alcohol and other substances. We all know that over the years we have had some very tragic accidents, particularly in the North Sound, resulting from the operation of vessels while under the influence of alcohol—and it is time that this issue gets addressed, Mr. Speaker, because in too many cases it is literally a matter of life and death.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the leadership teams of the men and women in the Royal Cayman Islands Police and the Cayman Islands Coast Guard for their stalwart work.

I want to confirm to the people of the Cayman Islands that this Government will continue to be people-driven, accountable, competent and transparent. Mr. Speaker, I believe the budget that we have presented to this honourable House is a fair reflection of our goals and ambitions and one which reflects a safe approach—one which is not reckless or reflects a spending spree. It is not a dash for debt at all, but a responsible and well-thought-out plan to get our country out of the necessary spending owed in relation to the COVID pandemic, and put our people back on track to get jobs,

to earn money, and welcome back visitors to recharge our economic engine.

Mr. Speaker, let us never lose sight what is ahead of us. Some of the windows of opportunity for our people are closing. We have existential threats facing our Caymanian way of life. Reducing inequality, incorporating sustainability in all that we do, embracing the technologies, these are things we can do to address those concerns. It bears repeating, Mr. Speaker: Prosperity without sustainability is not an option. There is no binary choice between prosperity and sustainability. We need both and we must demand both.

The case for change and transformation has been clearly set out by each Member of this PACT-Government, Mr. Speaker. In Dr. Frank McField's timeless play, *"Time Longer than Rope,"* which provided an almost-prophetic glimpse of the future of the Cayman Islands, one of the characters named Philip made the following observation: *"We are afraid of the future because it is not predictable, and we prefer the predictable even when it is destructive. We want everything to have value and meaning, but we give meaning to things not from our association with the present or our dreams of the future, but from our relationship to the past."* [UN-VERIFIED] Philip goes on to advise Mr. Speaker, *"Let the Island influence us. Listen to the sound of the sea, its hypnotic effect."*

Mr. Speaker, if we as leaders, listen to our people, if we listen to our natural environment, if we carefully read the signs of the times, we do not need to face our future with fear. Fear does not have to drive us; that is why we are not going to be scaremongering or going on a campaign of negativity. This is about building; about being positive; about adjusting and strengthening our people; our environment, our infrastructure, and institutions. This is what we stand for and it is what this budget for 2022 and 2023 financial years represents, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to congratulate the Honourable Deputy Premier, the Member for Bodden Town West, our capable and talented Minister for Finance and Economic Development; a man of great passion and eloquence, and indeed conviction, for presenting the Appropriation Financial Years 2022 and 2023 Bill.

[Desk thumping]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: As he will, Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to lend my voice to commending this Bill to this honourable House.

While I realise that we will be going into Finance Committee soon to scrutinise that which has been proposed in the Bill, I trust that it will be unanimously passed, for this is not for our own aggrandisement, but for the benefit of the Caymanian people, our children, and their children.

Mr. Speaker, it may be optimistic; I am hoping that we can get through Finance Committee relatively quickly because with all that we have had to do, I, too,

as the Minister for Financial Services said in his contribution, miss my constituents. I have not had much time to spend with them, and I need to get back there—I need to help them celebrate the holidays too.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

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

I call on the mover of the Bill for his right of reply. The Honourable Minister of Finance, the Member for Bodden Town West.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and Border Control and Labour, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Mr. Speaker, to borrow from something that my mother instilled in me from a very early age. I want to change it up a little bit to be gender neutral, **"Heights of great persons reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept, were toiling upwards in the night."**

Mr. Speaker, the reason that came back to me is [that] I remember how this Government came into being. On election night, when many people were partying, drinking, celebrating, champagne flowing, the Members on this side, ten of us to be exact, met and started putting a Government together. We recognised, Mr. Speaker, it was not the time to celebrate; it was the time to work. I remember you, Mr. Speaker, yourself, that same night, being there also, albeit for a very short time because you yourself also recognised that there was a government to be formed and there was work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, last Friday, exactly, about a week ago, a few hours passed a week, I made an invitation to my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town East, to join this independent government. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, the very same weekend and shortly thereafter, we were able to complete the will of the people.

In the last general election, the people in this country said they wanted a government of independents, and the only independent Member that was missing from this side was the Member for Bodden Town East and I would very much like to use this opportunity to formally welcome him to this side of the aisle. Mr. Speaker, our families go away back—my family and the Member for Bodden Town East's family. Our grandfathers were very good friends. I know his passion; I know he is a very caring person and a hard worker. Now I feel the Government is complete and the will of the people is complete.

Mr. Speaker, normally, when I am getting ready for speeches, I will admit I still get butterflies. The

night before is very difficult for me to sleep. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, because last night I was preparing and I must admit I had to basically write a completely different speech. The reason being: the first speech I did was based off many things the Opposition said, I decided it was time to, you know, take off the gloves. Then, you called me last night, Mr. Speaker, and said to me: *"You are ready for tomorrow?"* You said, *"Just remember now: stay positive. Do not do anything crazy. The people [are] looking for something good. Do not follow them people down there"*, was what you said to me.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you because I am going to be honest, Mr. Speaker: the contribution by the Member for West Bay South, our very capable and competent Minister André Ebanks, moved me. The contribution by the Honourable Minister of Education from Cayman Brac [East] moved me; and Mr. Speaker I will be honest: the contributions from Ministers Turner, Bryan and Jay [Ebanks] had me fired up and ready to go. I love their enthusiasm and passion.

I listened to the Parliamentary Secretaries—the Member for Savannah, the Member for West Bay Central and the Member for East End and, Mr. Speaker, I can say without a shadow of a doubt, this country is served by some very young, bright, competent, capable people.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Honourable Deputy Governor as he spoke about all that was achieved by members within the Civil Service; and I still have one disagreement with the Deputy Governor Mr. Speaker. I have said it to him already and I will say it to him again publicly: The Portfolio of the Civil Service needs to be changed to the Portfolio of the Public Service—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Because we cannot have a situation where we have one entity with two sets of rules. If we are doing something for the civil servants, we need to do it for all public servants and that is one of the things that we need to fix.

Now, Mr. Speaker, usually when I am preparing for speeches—I guess everyone in this honourable House has to draw inspiration—I start off by listening to music. Some positive music—some Bob Marley; a little Black Uhuru, that the honourable Member for Bodden Town East spoke about. I normally read two poems by the late great Nelson Mandela that came to my attention—*"Invictus"* and *"Our Deepest Fear"*—and before I start writing, Mr. Speaker, the last thing I actually do is read my Bible. It is still the greatest source for inspiration and motivation.

The other night just as I was getting ready to start my first speech, my sister who lives in Wales texted me and I decided to call her. She was her usual positive self. We started reminiscing about how proud of me and that my daddy would have been proud and—the usual stuff; and she asked me what Bible verse I

was going with. I said, *"I am not sure yet."* She said, *"Well, the one that actually came to me was Luke 6:37 that says:*

*"Do not judge and you will not be judged;
do not condemn and you will not be condemned;
forgive and you will be forgiven."*

That was the process when preparing for my first budget speech, Mr. Speaker, and it was on that basis that I borrowed from the Premier's Inaugural Address to this honourable Parliament, to recognise the work of many that went before us. Thus, I made reference to us building on foundations that we did not lay. We chose to give credit where credit was due because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, in this honourable House, we all have the same responsibility to uplifting the Caymanian people and the Cayman Islands.

After listening to the Member for Red Bay on Wednesday, I went home and started writing. That was when I was definitely fired up and ready to go. Sure enough, my sister called again and before she could give me a Bible verse, I said, *"No Carlene, I got one for you this time!"* Matthew 23:27-28 that says:

*"Woe to you, teachers of the law and
Pharisees, you hypocrites."*

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the previous Minister of Finance, now Leader of the Opposition, took the time out to read the pre-election economic and financial update that was prepared by the Ministry of Finance and published in March of this year, before the April General Elections. I am going to make a little bit of reference here but before doing so, I want to send copies to everybody in case they did not read it, so hold on for me.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Can you distribute this to all Members in this House for me? Mr. Speaker, I will ask permission to lay one of these on the Table also.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Table that formally.

Mr. Speaker, this document contains two sections. The first was more economic-driven and there is an Appendix at the back. I want to give Members enough time to get... Well, I am sure some people have it memorised.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Can you make sure the Leader of the Opposition gets a copy for me please, very quickly.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:

Now, Mr. Speaker, while we are waiting on that, I want you to turn to page 2 of the actual introduction, [which] as you can see, it is dated 16 March, 2021. I am going to ask you to flip to the back of the document, Mr. Speaker, because there are two sets of page numbers in there. I want you to turn to page 11, in particular.

Now, Mr. Speaker on page 11 you will see, in the two columns to the far right that says “Forecast 2021” and “Forecast 2022”, that core government was looking at a deficit of \$98,344,000 for 2021; and in the next column over, core government was looking at a deficit of \$59,596,000 for 2022.

Mr. Speaker, I want you to go over to page 12—and now I want to turn everyone in this House into accountants. This is what you call a statement of cash flows. It shows where the government gets receipts from; where payments are from; you have cash flows from investing activities and you have cash used and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, the line I want you to look at is closer to the bottom on page 12, closer to the back section of the book. It says:

	2021	2022
Proceeds from Borrowings	\$140 million	\$190 million

In short, Mr. Speaker: Before this Government took Office, [and] based on this pre-election forecast that was done in March, the Government at that time would need to borrow \$330 million between 2021 and 2022, in order to comply with the forecast that was prepared and presented by the Ministry of Finance. Again, Mr. Speaker, not our document.

Now, I want to show you the importance of this document, Mr. Speaker. I am going to go back to the very first page that says, “Introduction” and says “Purpose and Content”. It reads: **Section 26 of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) (the PMFA or the Act) provides for the Chief Officer of the Ministry responsible for Finance to Gazette a Pre-Election Economic and Financial Update (PREFU), not more than 42 days, nor less than 28 days before the date of a General Election. The Cayman Islands’ next General Election will be held on the 14 April 2021.** Again, Mr. Speaker, this was the Ministry of Finance’s independent work, not this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I raised that because I want to go back to page 21. If you look at page 21 of that document, Mr. Speaker, it speaks about the Compliance with the Principles of Responsible Finance Management. And, at this point, all of these big books that nobody use, I am going to pull up one of them now and go to page 32 of the Plan and Estimates. I just briefly

want to compare what was forecasted in 2022, to what we have produced in 2022 in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Forecast for 2022 - Deficit of \$59.96 million—highlighted in red at the top— *“Does not comply”*.

In our budget for 2022, Mr. Speaker: Surplus of \$19.4 million. *We comply*.

They said net worth \$1.3 billion. Our net worth is also \$1.3 billion.

Debt servicing was 9.2 per cent in the original forecast, before this Government came in, is now 7.4 per cent in this budget.

Net debt, which was forecasted at 46.6 per cent before this Government took over, is now at 18.6 per cent; and Cash Reserves at 95.9 days, we are at 137.9 days.

I say that to say, Mr. Speaker, that when this Government came into our seats of responsibility, this was what awaited us; and Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the hard work, dedication, and commitment of the ladies and gentlemen Members you see here, have changed that forecast around completely.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: I am telling the story, you will get there.

Mr. Speaker, they turned around and said that we lost confidence in this economy; that no one had confidence in this economy, but the irony, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government will exceed the revenues that were forecasted for 2021 by the Ministry of Finance back in March, by more than \$100 million. When people get up and talk about *“people losing confidence in this Government”*, I want to know what confidence they are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, again I say: *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”*

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said in his Address that they were yet to scrutinise the budget but for whatever reason, he had much criticism on the budget and now I ask: *How can you criticise when you did not scrutinise?*

Mr. Speaker, he quoted all the points we need to be cautious of, from page 24 but, Mr. Speaker, do you know what comes before page 24? Page 23; Page 22; Page 21; Page 20; Page 19; Page 18; Page 17—and I want to distribute to this honourable House, page 17.

One second.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: I do not need to Table this because this entire document is Tabled, but please make sure the Speaker and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition get it first—thank you.

This is just page 17 of the Plan and Estimates, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Actually, in the interest of time, please hand this one out too—sorry.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that we did not provide details of how all of these funds were going to be appropriated. I took him at his word when he said he did not have time to scrutinise; so even though he quoted from page 24 and page 17 came before page 24, let me read page 17, which was skipped over: Page 17 lists the Government's 10 broad outcomes. I will read them for the record, Mr. Speaker:

Broad Outcome 1 - Improving Education to Promote Lifelong Learning and Greater Economic Mobility. If you look at the pie chart below, Mr. Speaker, that 17 per cent is actually in blue; and in the interest of clarity, I also handed out a second sheet that shows how much that translates into in dollars. In this case, it is \$302.6 million.

Broad Outcome 2 - Ensuring an Equitable, Sustainable and Successful Healthcare System. On that page, broad outcome number 2 is in red—12 per cent which is \$213.6 million.

Broad Outcome 3 - Providing Solutions to Improve the Well-Being of Our People so that they can Achieve their Full Potential.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, they are all included there:

- **Broad Outcome 4 - Strengthening Good Governance for More Effective Government**
- **Broad Outcome 5 - Supporting Climate Change, Resilience and Sustainable Development.**
- **Broad Outcome 6 - Increasing Social Justice in the Workforce.**
- **Broad Outcome 7 - Utilising Sports to Enhance the Lives of Our People.**
- **Broad Outcome 8 - Building a Modern Infrastructure to Ensure a Successful Future of Our Islands.**
- **Broad Outcome 9 - Improve our Financial Services as an Industry, Product, and economic Driver for Our Islands; and**
- **Broad Outcome 10 - Improve our Tourism Industry, as product, and Economic Driver.**

Again, Mr. Speaker, they are all included in the Plan and Estimates on page 17. It was not even buried at the back of the book, Mr. Speaker. So again, how can you criticise when you did not scrutinise?

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about pension reform, but the truth of the fact is that the last Government could not even appoint a Pension Board. Considering that their term ended in April 2021, do you know when was the last time the Pension Board actually met before the General Election in April, 2021? I will not tell you it was April 2020; I am not even

going to tell you it was April 2019; February 2019! More than two years before the election—and a Motion I brought asking the Government to deal with pension was rejected.

Mr. Speaker, again I say: *“Woe to you teachers of the law, you Pharisees, you hypocrites.”*

Mr. Speaker, we do recognise that there are changes that need to be made and—actually, even though [it will take] a little time, I want to read the Motion:

“AND WHEREAS the recent changes to the National Pension Law 2012 have impacted the adequacy of pension plans to meet the retirement needs of current and future generations of employees working in the Cayman Islands;

AND WHEREAS this Legislative body has the constitutional responsibility to consider the impact of laws passed and enacted to ensure that they are in the best long-term interest of the Cayman Islands;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly establish a Select Committee to review the impact of the recent changes to the National Pensions Law and make recommendations to ensure the adequacy and viability of the pension funds registered in the Cayman Islands to meet the future retirement needs of the people of the Cayman Islands before 28th February 2021;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Select Committee also considers the feasibility of implementing disability benefits for employees in the Cayman Islands.”

It was rejected in October 2020, Mr. Speaker; more than a year ago, and now you are going to come and tell us you want pension reform? Again, I say, *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”*

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition spoke about a poorly functioning health insurance market. They had eight years! That is 96 months, 2,922 days—I added two days for the two leap years during that time. Mr. Speaker, we have not even been in Office for eight months, yet all of a sudden now there are solutions for health insurance.

Mr. Speaker, we have started the process to expand the Cayman Islands National Insurance Company (CINICO's) offerings to bring better products and better prices to the market, and I am looking forward to making that statement sometime in the third quarter next year, once we have gotten all the necessary regulatory and other approvals for that to [be] done.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: The problem my dear friend, Leader of the Opposition, is not what you start, it is actually what you finish.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: As the Honourable Member for West Bay South reminded [us], he worked on a piece of legislation between 2013 and 2017 and *it sat on the shelf four years* for him to come back to pass it. The issue is not what you intended to do; the issue is what have you actually done?

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, my 14-year-old son can mean the best for this country. It does not mean he is going to get it done. Anybody can mean well, but very few people can actually deliver. That is the difference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of insurance is to spread risk. The error that was made—and I use the term error, because an error does not become a mistake until you fail to correct it—while we made it mandatory for people to buy health insurance, we never made it mandatory for the companies to sell us insurance, and as a result, CINICO is taking the risk. The civil servants are actually subsidising the private sector Mr. Speaker, truth be told.

Mr. Speaker, to put this in context: it is costing CINICO \$100 million a year in premiums for just over 14,000 customers, but when you read CIMA's report on the health insurance industry and the premiums collected in 2020, the total amount was \$340 million; so CINICO is \$100 million for 14,000 and the other 46,000 people is actually \$240 million—it is either they are highly efficient, or CINICO is left with all the risk.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now: That needs to stop, and this Government intends to stop it.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Who do you think is paying the bill for CINICO, Mr. Speaker? It is buried inside here.

An Hon. Member: Government.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, the only thing the Leader of the Opposition said in his speech after eight years in Government (96 months, 2,922 days)—again, I added the two leap years—is that the Chamber of Commerce is doing something.

Now, I ask: Which Caymanian voter elected the Chamber of Commerce to do something about their health insurance? The Chamber of Commerce does not run this country; the people of the Cayman Islands run this country—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: — And are represented by their representatives inside here. Again, Mr. Speaker, I say:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the true impact of COVID will not be felt for a long time.

I attended the Clifton Hunter Graduation last night Mr. Speaker, and it is the first time I saw so many talented kids—well done, proud of them—and their parents were not there to share in the moment. I do not know what that would feel like because every graduation, I have had, my parents have been there. My family has been there.

Hence, I recognise, Mr. Speaker, that there are some impacts of COVID that will be felt for a long time. I have known of couples that because of lockdown, found a new love for themselves and the relationship got stronger. I have also known couples where one man tells me, *“Boss, I found out my wife cannot cook.”*

[Laughter]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: It caused problems in his marriage.

[Laughter]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, there are many things that people can blame COVID for, but the best one, Mr. Speaker, that takes the cake, is that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said they were getting ready to ban single-use plastic if not for COVID. Really?! Mr. Speaker, if there was a time that no one needed plastic cups and plastic straws it was during lock down when restaurants were closed. Even that COVID gets blamed for. We could not ban single-use plastic because of COVID. Woy.

[Laughter]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you right now... I will come back to this part. I am not ready to use this one yet. Let me just make a note. I will keep that one for the end.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier touched on this earlier when we talked about reopening and the thing about politics, Mr. Speaker, you are quick to read the blogs, hear what people [are] saying and they get excited. The thing with leadership, Mr. Speaker, is that it is not always popular. [Like] back in June, when everyone started getting rock-fever, “Open the borders!” The Opposition, being the good politicians that they are, ran out and called a press conference quick, quick, “*Government should open by 1st September.*” Mr. Speaker, mark it, if you go back to June 15 or thereabouts, the Delta variant had not even started to take off yet. As a

matter of fact, the Delta variant came about two or three weeks after, and really started taking off. Had we listened to them and opened when they wanted us to open, Mr. Speaker, it would have been a completely different story today.

They laughed at us but give credit where credit is due. The Honourable Member for Red Bay admitted, that he did not expect that the Government would have held fast with the vaccination rate, but we did. At least he gave us credit for that.

The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that leadership is not about making the popular decisions at the time. It is about being patient, being prudent and, more importantly, it is about making the right decision—the safe decision, and this is what this Government chose to do! And, as soon as the Delta [variant] took off, all of a sudden, *“The Government is reckless trying to reopen, they need to close.”* I mean, which is it? *Do they want us to open? Do they want us to close?*

Mr. Speaker, the worst part, that really adds insult to injury, not just to mine, but also to my colleagues and the Caymanian people as a whole, is that during his debate, the Leader of the Opposition suggested... Wait for it...

[Laughter]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: That we have a national discussion on cruise tourism. Mr. Speaker, I almost fell out of my chair. To borrow from the Honourable Premier's closing of the SPS, I want to borrow this line:

There is a 5th dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area we call the Twilight Zone. Mr. Speaker: I will say no more.

Mr. Speaker, now I want to get into the budget, in particular, the issue of borrowing. Bear in mind now, their pre-election forecast done on the 16th March 2021, before this Government arrived, said that the Government would need to borrow \$330 million between 2021 and 2022.

Mr. Speaker, all we have borrowed is US \$10 million to keep alive the line of credit that the previous Minister of Finance and the previous Government put in place in case we need it; and I want to thank them, because I will say this much: It was the right thing to do. The question is then, if you did it and it was right, [why] all of a sudden [when] we want to do it we are reckless?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say unto you, *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”*

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on something and—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, that is the first thing I want to establish: Not one single penny is being borrowed to pay operational expenses, the reason being, unlike the 2022 forecast that said we are going to lose \$59 million and then you will definitely need to borrow to cover that gap, we actually have a surplus. What that says is that the Government's day-to-day expenses can be met by its revenues.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, we have cut our cloth to fit us. We have not gone crazy.

Now, here is what I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker: we need to recognise that in every single developed country around the world, the Government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the country. So, what the Opposition is basically advising this Government, at least I think that is what they are trying to say, I am not sure, but just in case; they are saying that we are reckless and that this budget represents me and the Premier's failure to keep our Ministers in line.

Mr. Speaker, back in 2020, Government spending's as a percentage of GDP was 18.3 per cent; for 2021, it is forecasted to be 20.1 per cent, for 2022, 17.8 per cent; and in 2023, 17.2 per cent.

What you are basically saying, Mr. Speaker, this is advice that we were given, is that we must go through the process of restricting our expenditure to the point that we cannot afford to do certain things.

Let me find something here again... I want to make sure I have it right. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition says we should cut, we are reckless. I am going to ask them, what they want us to cut.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport: Hmmm, Good night.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, the budget includes 35 per cent, \$654 million over the next two years, in salaries to the civil service. Does the Opposition want us to cut the civil service?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport: A'wa ya say?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Is that what they are saying? Clearly it is too much. Included in that amount, Mr. Speaker, is \$161,715,000 for health care. Is that what we should cut? Should we sit down and cut pensions for civil servants? Is that where we should cut?

Mr. Speaker, included in the budget over the next two years, is \$298,511,000 for services that the government buys from the private sector; people who need jobs; people who do business with the government. Should we go and cut \$298 million from people who we do business with? Bearing in mind that many

of them employ Caymanians to work and do service with government. Is that where we should cut, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, they say we should cut the budget. I am asking: Do they want us to cut Cayman Airways? Almost \$37 million over the next two years. Should we cut the CAYS Foundation, \$6,200,000? UCCI, \$13.3 million? Health insurance for veterans and seaman, \$30 million? Health insurance for civil servants that are retired, \$72 million? *Where do they want us to cut? Where should we cut?*

Mr. Speaker, when I sit down and I go through this budget, we have transfer payments of \$114 million. Included in those transfer payments are:

- More than \$20 million for scholarships;
- \$28 million for financial assistance;
- \$22 million for ex-gratia benefits to seamen and ex-servicemen;
- \$10 million in extraordinary stipend relief for our people;
- \$1.8 million food programme;
- \$2.7 million private school grants;
- \$2.5 million Special Education Needs (SENS) scholarships;
- \$1.7 million medical scholarships.

Where should we cut?!

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport: Give 'em a minute [to] think about it.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, you know what I realised, I think I know what it is. Where is that budget?

[Inaudible interjections and crosstalk]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, they say that we are spending too much money and we need to cut. These are the Purchases agreement, these are monies or purchases that we make to certain associations:

- Academy Sports Club
- Bodden Town Football Club
- Red Cross
- Calvary Baptist Christian Academy
- Cayman Academy
- Cayman Athletic Sports Club
- Cayman Drama Society
- Cayman Learning Centre
- Cayman Prep School
- Jasmine
- Cayman Land and Sea Cooperative Society
- Cayman Islands Agricultural Society
- Cayman Islands Angling Club
- Cayman Islands Athletic Association
- Cayman Islands Aquatic Sports Association
- Cayman Islands Basketball Association
- Cayman Islands Boxing Association
- Cayman Islands Cadet Corps Committee

- Cayman Cricket
- Cayman Islands Crisis Centre
- Cycling Association
- Darts Association
- They even have the Equestrian Federation inside it
- Football Association
- Cayman Islands Humane Society
- Cayman International School is there
- Cayman Islands Marathon.
- There are many—Cayman Islands Olympic Committee
- Rugby Union
- Sailing Club
- Scouts Association
- Volleyball Federation
- Youth Development Consortium
- Cayman Music Entertainment Association
- Cayman National Cultural Foundation
- Children and Youth Family Foundation
- Clever Fish School
- Clifton Hunter High School PTA
- Duke of Edinburgh International Award
- Employee Assistance Programme
- FC International Football Club
- First Baptist Christian School
- Flowers Sea Swim
- Footsteps School
- Future Sports Club
- the Garden Club.

Which one should we cut?!

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something, the truth be told—and I will bring it out here today—when the Caucus was presented the full budget, I can tell you this much, there were some Ministers who actually wanted another \$50 million in cut. I can tell you that much and we went and said to them, *if we take this money out of the economy, then what?* You have to factor in the multiplier effect. People depend on doing business with the government. You cannot just take money out of the economy and think it does not have a ripple effect. It does not work like that and they are basically saying at a time when the economy needs help, when tourism is still not at full productivity is the time that we should cut? That is the time when we should spend less?

Mr. Speaker, they chose and I supported it at the time, to have the pension holiday and have people withdraw from their pensions. I supported it. *Why?* The country needed to have injection of funds in the local economy. It helped many businesses to not close their doors. It was the right thing to do. We are still in a global pandemic. Do you think this is the time for government to cut, to further drive economy backwards? Again, I say, *“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites.”*

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that we are borrowing for is for capital investments and equity into our Government-owned companies, and in some cases, Mr. Speaker, we are lending money to our own companies.

We are lending money to the Airports Authority because they are hurting; business is down.

We are lending money to Cayman Turtle Centre because they are hurting; business is down and we chose to lend them the money because we can:

- a) Get a better interest rate; and
- b) It keeps our margins better, in terms of complying with our FFR in terms of the debt service-ratio, et cetera.

That is the wise thing to do; but, Mr. Speaker, I am going to give you some highlights of what is actually included on the capital side and they can tell me then what they want me cut.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we are borrowing to fund our capital projects and invest in our Statutory and Government companies.

Included in the two-year budget is \$23.9 million for the ReGen project. Now, Mr. Speaker, we did not have a choice. We did not sign up for that one; we inherited that; and Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition praised the Government's negotiation of that contract. The only thing I will say to that, Mr. Speaker, is [that] I wish the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would tell the public what was the guaranteed return on that investment, and then compare that guaranteed return to the minimum return on investment that is guaranteed to CUC. I will say no more.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: No, I will say no more. I will leave a little bit of homework.

Mr. Speaker, included in the two-year budget is almost \$69 million [which] we will break down; \$35 million for John Gray. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it was in that position I am not sure, where the Honourable Member for Red Bay got up back in 2007/2008 when he decided to build the schools and said, that *only God could stop him*.

Mr. Speaker, he said it in his notes, and I made a note of it at the time. He said the Government had not built any schools for a very long time—that's a lie! Mr. Speaker, Roy Bodden built Prospect Primary for \$12 million under your then Government.

So, all of a sudden, three years later no school had been built for a long time when the last school you built costed \$12 million; but you are going to start building two schools for \$150 million and 14 years later, we are still here budgeting to fix it?! After eight years; 96

months; 2,922 days and (again, the two days for the leap years), they still cannot finish the schools! And then they are going to come here and tell us about "reckless"?! Two terms as a Premier and cannot finish two schools.

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites."

Mr. Speaker, also included is \$7 million for purchase of land for conservation—I think that is actually pretty good, because we do need to start buying more land.

We also need to upgrade the prison—and Mr. Speaker, I can tell you I visited the prison; it is in my district. Something needs to be done about that building and I can tell you, we have scaled back and everything has been phased in, so it is roughly \$7 million that is included for each year over the next two years, and we are doing everything in different phases.

The Honourable Member for West Bay North spoke about the ladder trucks needed for the Fire Department, \$2.1 million. Included is \$18.2 million equity investment in Cayman Airways Ltd.; \$19 million equity investment in National Housing Trust. We have Roadworks, \$6 million and \$24 million; Submarine cable \$30 million, and the mental health facility \$11.6 million, Mr. Speaker. Coastal patrol vessels \$4 million and the RCIPS building, \$1.9 million. Mr. Speaker, *which one of these should be cut?*

I want to touch on the submarine cable that the Honourable Member for North Side and the Minister of Infrastructure spoke about. We have two international connections to the world today in Cayman, from a cable or fibre standpoint: The Cayman/Jamaica fibre system that came online in 1996; and the MAYA-1 cable that came online in 2000.

By industry standards, these submarine cables are given an estimated useful life of 25 years. It does not mean they cannot work past 25 years, but industrial standards is 25 years. 25 years from 1996, Mr. Speaker is 2021. The Cayman/Jamaica fibre system has reached the end of its useful life. By 2025, the MAYA-1 would have reached the end of its useful life.

Mr. Speaker, I was involved in telecoms when Ivan hit and the MAYA-1 went down. The only thing connecting Cayman to the world outside of satellite, was the Cayman/Jamaica fibre system. Most people do not know: the other day when Tropical Storm Grace or Hurricane Grace was approaching, the Cayman/Jamaica fibre system went down because of the earthquake—I think in Haiti or one of those places. I think it was an earthquake, but either way it affected it. The Cayman/Jamaica fibre system went down. The only piece of infrastructure that we had connecting Cayman to the world was the MAYA-1 and Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, I held my breath, because if that went down, we would have literally lost connectivity to the world. That is our entire internet. That is our banking system. That is our financial services—you name it. That is how im-

portant these things are to this country. Financial services is our bread and butter, no doubt about that. The financial services need international connectivity such as these.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot wait until 2025 when you consider that this project can take anywhere from two to four years to be implemented. This is why the Government is making the hard decision not to wait on some investor who is going to come in and wait till our back is against the wall and say, *this is the best I can do for you*.

Like real estate, Mr. Speaker. They say there is a Five D's Rule: you buy real estate when somebody's dead, divorced, destitute, desperate, or a drug addict—property becomes cheaper. This does not work like that. The responsible thing to do, Mr. Speaker, is to make the provision to make sure that Cayman stays connected to the world. Again, I will ask my honourable Members on the Opposition, which one of these projects you want to cut?

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Member for West Bay South when he said that he held his ground on his social programmes. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, he did. He said we cannot afford to cut this. This is needed. This is for our people and Mr. Speaker, as much as the Honourable Member for Red Bay got up and referred to one of the most hard working Ministers—the Minister for Infrastructure, he referred to as a five-minute Minister—I will tell you what: he gave up \$6 million from his “shiny toys” as they call it, to ensure that the Minister for Social Work, Social Development, had the money to take care of our people.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: And then the audacity, temerity, and hypocrisy of the Member for Red Bay.

Rather than come here as a seasoned Member of this House and encourage the new Members, he referred to him as a five-minute Minister; but you know what, Mr. Speaker? I will take a five-minute Minister who does something over a five-hour former Minister that did nothing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, the Member for George Town North in his opening contribution...

As with most things—and Mr. Speaker, so the public can understand: whenever Opposition Members are talking, we make little notes. First, we note when they start, then we make notes to the side of what they said that we think needs to be corrected; then we put the time on it so we can go back and check the index of what they said.

Mr. Speaker, first thing he made a quip: United Democratic PACT. I can say we are united. We do believe in democracy, and if there was any time that we can show that, [it] was last Monday night in this Chamber, when I got up to close and the Premier and the Minister of Education asked for your indulgence to keep the debate going, unlike what they did to the Member for George Town Central when he was in the Opposition. We kept the debate going.

We knew politically that to give the Opposition so much time—a whole day, Tuesday off and come back; we expected nothing short of fire and brimstone. I was actually looking forward to the Member for Red Bay's presentation because Mr. Speaker, it is good entertainment, but you know what, this is not entertaining business; this is serious business.

When the Member said United Democratic PACT, I smiled. You know why I smiled, Mr. Speaker? I looked at your good self in that chair, the Father of the House, one of the longest-serving Members in this country's political history, and I am reminded of one thing, the essence of leadership is not to create more followers, the essence of leadership is to create more leaders.

As you sit in that chair, you can point to people like me, the Member for George Town Central, Minister Ebanks for North Side, the honourable Member for Bodden Town East; you can talk about Mark Scotland, Ralston, CG, Jonathan Piercy, Lyndon...

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Who?

An Hon. Member: Ms. Julie too!

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Yeah, and the Member for Cayman Brac East, you know.

An Hon. Member: Bernie too!

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: And the Minister for Home Affairs; but the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask people in this country to go back and look at Cayman's political history over the last 30 years and look at the many people who have passed through this Chamber and see who has brought more young people to this process than you.

Many of them, Mr. Speaker, had to be voted out. They talk about succession planning and they had none. The reason you are sitting there, Mr. Speaker, is as the Bible says, *when you cast the bread out to the waters it comes back*. We have had our political disagreements; that is no lie. I have beat up on you too; that is no lie—but you know what Mr. Speaker? I want the

public to understand this: In this Parliament, in this legislative body, there is no Christopher Selvin Saunders; there is no Kenneth Vernon Bryan, there is no Johany Ebanks; there are only the Members for Bodden Town West, the Member for George Town Central and the Member for North Side.

This is why we refer to people as Members.

Mr. Speaker, when we yielded last Monday night and begged your indulgence it was not to help out Joey Hew; it was to make sure the people of George Town North who elected him got their voice heard.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:

That is what it is about. We are not here about silencing people. We recognised and decided that the Opposition represents other Caymanians too! Their voices need to be heard! This is what this business is about. It is not about political one-man-up-ship. It is about peoples' voices being heard.

Mr. Speaker, when they make their little quips or remarks, I just smile.

The only other thing I can say to the Member for George Town North, because the last thing he said that I made a note of when he again referred to the borrowing of \$350 million and then he divided it by 30,000 Caymanians—I tuned out. Do you know when was the last time was that we had 30,000 Caymanians, Mr. Speaker? Back in 2004/2005.

If this is the analysis that you do not even know the number of Caymanians we have. It is 37,000 plus as at the end of 2020 per the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO). It takes you 12 seconds to find that on any website if you have the right speed, and you are going to come here and use a number from 2004/2005?!

Who is going to take you seriously after that?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:

You know what the insulting part about it is, Mr. Speaker? And it is a good thing about having been in Government and having access to so much information very quickly... In the last eight years between 2013 and 2021, over 5,000 statuses were granted under that Government. Over 5,000, and they did not even count them; they left them out completely because it was almost 7,000 they were off by.

Mr. Speaker, here is what is missing from that analysis too: All the permanent residents; all the Caymanians who are married to people who are currently Residency & Employment Rights Certificate (RERCs) [holders]. They are a part of the fabric of this community too.

We are not 30,000 Caymanians, Mr. Speaker. We are many more than that, but it is ironic that when we had the debate on the vaccine, all of a sudden, they

were protectors of everybody else but now conveniently, cannot even get the population number right. Then they say the Government must not say to the Opposition, *we have got this*. How can I take you seriously, if you do not even know how many people we have?

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Red Bay wax lyrical on the whole work permit issue, et cetera. Mr. Speaker, every video I sent out prior to the election had something—a little tag line: **"Elections have consequences"**. If the people of this country were happy with the status quo, many of the Members on this side would be sitting in the Opposition and the Opposition would be over here. The election is over. The people have decided they do not want those policies. They do not want a policy of open immigration.

Mr. Speaker, nobody can tell you more about the value that immigration plays in this country. My grandmother came here more than 70 years ago. She can cook and clean well. She had 10 children and during her productive years, only one went to college. She has thirty-something grandkids; 16 of us college-educated and for her great grandchildren, I passed 50 and stopped counting.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands' success story was not built on immigration, it was built on integration. People coming together, building something together. What we have in this country, Mr. Speaker—and I am going to say it right now—is a point system that places nurses and teachers, people who we need to build up this country, at a disadvantage because of their income levels and what they can afford, compared to lawyers and accountants. COVID has shown us that people who we never thought were essential before, became valuable.

Mr. Speaker, you know something I was happy for, the very people in the supermarkets who I was always polite and nice to, I was able to go to many of them, give them my money and a list and say, *pick this up for me*. I did not even have to go to supermarket. They did that for me out of kindness. People never realised how having access to a supermarket was so valuable, during COVID. The people who we never looked at, we started looking at differently.

As the Member for West Bay South said, Mr. Speaker, our budget must reflect our values, and this is what this budget does. It also must reflect our policies and Mr. Speaker, our policy is simple: Caymanians come first. Caymanians must have equal opportunity in this country. That is what it is about.

We cannot guarantee equal outcome, Mr. Speaker, and despite the Member for Red Bay trying to use the dog whistle and planting the false flag and using terms like socialist and all of that... I recognise it is par for the course, that the minute you try to do something to help people, all of a sudden you become a socialist.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached a point and we have seen it in the United States where they have privatised profits and socialised loss. Anything that loses

money, the government must do it, but anything that makes money, the private sector must do it. How else do they expect us to... Mr. Speaker, do you really and truly think that we can collect enough money from police fines, to pay for the police service? Does anyone really think that? Does anyone think we can collect enough money?

How do we even pay for something like the Fire Department, Mr. Speaker, if we do not have other departments making money to pay for the Fire Department? How do you expect us to pay for teachers? Charge the parents to educate their kids, when education is a basic human right? Some departments have to make money and some departments have to spend it. It is that simple. So again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Members in the Opposition, *what do you want us to cut?* Scrutinise the budget, come back and tell us where we should cut.

I will be more than happy to have that conversation but one thing that the Premier and all my colleagues in this Government were adamant about, Mr. Speaker: we were going to return this country to comply with the FFR. We were not prepared to be running a deficit in the first budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share something with you; I want to go back to this same pre-election forecast [for] a second and show you something.

I want you to go back to page 12, in the back part of the Pre-election Forecast and Mr. Speaker, there is a number I want you to look at. On the Cash Flow Statement there's a section that says, Cash Used - Purchase of Property, Plant and Equipment - Original Budget 2021 \$96,479,000. That are the capital expenses right there, Mr. Speaker.

In the next column, here is how much the forecast was for Cabinet expenditure in 2021—again, this was done in March, before this Government came in. Here is the Capital Spend for 2021: \$210,492,000; \$210 million was the forecast, Mr. Speaker; and in 2022, it was \$122,976,000.

Just to put things in context [and] again, just comparing like for like: their forecast for 2022 in Capital Spend was \$122,976,000, ours is \$138,577.00—\$16 million more, thereabouts.

Mr. Speaker, \$210 million forecasted for 2021. Do you know what the total Capital Spend is as of the end of October—how much cash we have used on capital? I can tell you right now, it is not \$210 million. I can tell you right now, it is not \$190 million, not \$180 million, not \$170 million, not even \$150 million, Mr. Speaker; not even \$130 or \$120 million. Not even. At the end of October, our total Capital Spend was \$108 million. That is how much cash we used on capital. This forecasted had \$210 million.

Now, unless the DG's Civil Servants can go out and spend \$102 million of capital in the next two months—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: In the next two weeks—but I have not gotten November's number yet, sorry; this is in October. Deputy Governor, if your civil servants go out and use up \$102 million in cash over the next two months, I will be really shocked.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first things we did was recognise [that in] these budget documents, the funds are appropriated to the Minister. We put in a policy: Any purchase order being issued over \$5000, needs to be approved by the Minister. Yes, it created work, but it did two things:

1. Made people think twice about doing it; and
2. Made the Ministers have an idea of what is really going on in their Department.

To borrow from the Deputy Governor: He once told me what he used to do to keep checks in line was say to his Chief Officers, *"If you have an explanation for the Public Accounts Committee for this, and you can get it pass Messrs. Saunders and Miller, then you can do it."* Some of them would go away and not come back, unless they really needed it. We all have to do something.

Mr. Speaker, the public finance is a serious business.

Two weeks ago, or thereabouts—two weeks, I think—I called the Auditor General and I said to her, *"I need to sit with you in January. We want to go through and change the whole look of Government. These budgets are output-based, we need them to be outcome-based."*

There are many flaws within the system. You go through the Procurement Law, there are many areas that are exempt. We need to make sure that we have processes in place to deal with those exempted areas, because it is important for democracy. It is important for checks and balances, that even though we are young, we put the proper process in place. Equally, Mr. Speaker, I have to sit with the Leader of the Opposition and ask him the question: *"What information would you need from Government, on a regular basis in order to do your job and be an effective Opposition?"*

Mr. Speaker, we are doing the public's business. Outside of National Security, it cannot be done in private. The public's business must be done in the public. It is that simple. This Government is about transparency, and while I recognise that we may be giving the Opposition ammunition to beat us, at a minimum, it will probably make the Ministers perform a bit better to avoid coming down here and move from a five-minute Minister to a three-minute Minister, as per the Member for Red Bay.

Mr. Speaker, I must also say, politics aside and while I am sitting here, [that] in my Heart of Hearts I know that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is a good man. He is a decent man. I do not want anyone to think, while we go through this democratic process, that I think otherwise. I have a lot of respect for him. I

have a lot of time for him. Last week Friday, Mr. Speaker, I extended an invitation across the aisle [that] bore fruit—do not worry, I am not going to extend another one.

I just want the Members of the Opposition to know, [that] I was [so] moved by the Member for Cayman Brac East's contribution, that it completely changed my speech; Mr. Speaker, if you read the original version of his speech—it was fire and brimstone, much of it raining down on the Member for Red Bay. Much of it, but as you and the Honourable Premier said to me, do not go there. This is not what we are about; and not what the country is about. The country is about having our people united; our best hands on deck and working together to move this country forward.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: That's the *toned-down* version?

[Laughter]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: This is the toned-down version, [and] Mr. Speaker, I want to share something.

This morning Mr. Herbert Crawford dropped off this book to me and asked me to give a copy to every Member of Parliament. I have a copy for you, too. I like this book, Mr. Speaker. I actually use it on a daily basis now, the reason being that it helps with my morning devotion because, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this much, if you never had a relationship with God before politics, believe you me: You need it now.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: The book is entitled: **366 Prayers for All Seasons** by Herbert Crawford and he even recognised the leap years too, which I am happy for, but the page that got my attention, Mr. Speaker, was page 67. It says, **"Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature,"** and the prayer that went with it, Mr. Speaker, that actually got me this morning. This was the prayer:

"O, God our Heavenly Father, we pray that You would help us to become mature in our faith as we live it out on a daily basis. Sometimes, Lord, You how immature we act as Christians, when we allow every little and insignificant thing to keep us down and steal our joy.

Help us, Lord God, that as matured Christians we would learn to follow Your will and purpose You have for our lives and to live our lives in the fruit of the Spirit. Strengthen our faith Lord, so that we will have no fear for what may befall us.

Father God, we yearn as matured persons to bring our emotions, the things we say or do, our fears and doubts and everything else that stand as evidence of our immaturity under Your

subjection. May You see fit Lord to continue to bless and keep us steadfast in our faith.

Help us Dear Lord, never to bring Your name into disrepute but through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, our lives would be living testimonies to those around us. Thank you, Father, for truly giving us the opportunity to trust You and to rely on Your promises.

Amen."

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: That was the verse that caught me, and as much as you may think I went off today, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: This is the toned-down version because believe you me—and Minister Bryan, even your friend Marc Langevin from the Ritz was featured quite heavily. I decided, *you know what, I am not even going to use my Parliamentary privilege to deal with him.*

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to anyone in the Bodden Town West constituency who would like a copy of this book, let me know, and I will be more than happy to buy one for them. It is a really good book, written by a very good and decent person. I would gladly recommend it to anyone and if you cannot afford it, let me know, and I will buy one for you. It is a good book.

Mr. Speaker, as the Member for West Bay South said, our values are buried in our budget. The process that we went through... I feel like a Pastor, boy... The process that we went through in doing this budget, Mr. Speaker, is that we started with all the actuals. As the Member for Red Bay rightfully said, once you make an expense for it operationally, it becomes permanent.

I can say he is somewhat correct in that statement because one of the things successive governments have not done, Mr. Speaker, is that as Government changes and priorities change, we do not go back to the Civil Service and say, *well we are shifting priorities here, move resources that you had here (which is no longer a priority) and move it there.* We leave it by itself, and that is one thing that we need to fix because ideally, Mr. Speaker, I will say this much, we have some of the best working public servants in the world—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Regardless of what people say; and at some point, you will always have frustration somewhere at the customer service level. We get that. It happens. Many times, it is even justified by the public because they expect a certain level of service.

One of the motions that I brought, Mr. Speaker, was to bring a bonus scheme within the public servants and while my colleagues on this side, led by the Honourable Premier, were kind enough to do an Honorarium at a certain level and below, we wish we could have done more, but the current financial situation does not allow it.

We also do recognise that if we were to do a 5 per cent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), it is also a percentage increase in pension and so forth so it is not just a one-off line, so we try to see wherever we can top up, we can top up; and that is one of the reasons why, even the pilot programme that we have planned for CINICO, it has to start with the public servants; because at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the policy of this Government is about expanding the middle class. Our people talk about a dying middle class, a shrinking middle class. The only way that you can expand the middle class is by giving people opportunities. This is what this Government is about.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible for Labour, there is one damage that has been done to the Caymanian economy that has kept many Caymanian families back, and I am want to speak about it now. It is the importation of cheap labour.

Mr. Speaker, cheap labour is so bad, that most people do not realise it is one of the reasons why slavery was abolished. If people really go back and look at slavery—if anyone automatically thinks and believes that the North and South of the United States of America went to war over slavery, they are sadly mistaken, but that is a different story for a different time. When I see you, I can explain it to you. It always about economics.

Slavery in the British Empire, Mr. Speaker, was ended, you know why? The people in Britain wanted cheaper products. The plantations in Brazil had a lot of land and could produce much more at a cheaper price, [but] they could not get the cheap goods in the UK because the plantations in the Caribbean had a monopoly on the UK markets, and the only way to break the monopoly was to break the plantations, so they could get cheaper goods and that is what he did.

They lobbied the politicians and everybody so William Wilberforce and all of them yes, they may have done it for moral reasons, it was still always about economics.

My father was a bartender, [he] went to sea and tended bar at the Holiday Inn—and yes, we had the argument that sometimes he served you and would not serve you, whatever, but you know you were under age. Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is this: a bartender's salary and my mother doing administrative work was able to send five kids to university.

My mother stopped by this morning; I heard [about] one sister's law degree—she is waiting to be called to the Bar. One sister just came back from doing her Medical Board exams and I said to her jokingly, *you'll have a lawyer; you have a doctor, you have an*

accountant... I have one sister in the UK, the one that I talked to, [has] two Master's degrees and one sister, the one in St. Lucia, retired. Gone to St. Lucia and retired. Five children; five college educated—granted, three of us had government scholarships too, this is why these programmes are important to us.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman success story, was never about income inequality, it was about income mobility.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: That our people, once they worked hard [and] were committed and dedicated, would have been able to do well. I benefited from that and many Members on this side benefited from that, and we have allowed our immigration policies, successive Governments, not just the last one, successive Governments, have allowed our immigration policies to disrupt our Caymanian way of life.

This is the reason, Mr. Speaker, why we have also voted funds to have more community projects to bring our people together, because if there is one thing that I tell anybody: there is nowhere else in the world you can find almost 150 nationalities sharing 102 square miles—nowhere.

The Member for Red Bay read this excerpt from the Economist magazine. While I may read articles, I would like to recommend a little bit of reading. Mr. Speaker, this book is the *Competitive Advantage of Nations* by Michael E. Porter. It is a big book, but what it speaks about is countries building on their strengths and what it is that they can do to grow.

We have a unique product; as the Member for West Bay South said, the Americans get it. Many people get it. We need to do a better job. I recommend this reading for anyone—and no, you are not borrowing this, because every book I lend you, I do not get back.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Now, you know you mean that to yourself, right?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, the other book—

The Speaker: You need to bring my books back.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Call it a trade.

Mr. Speaker, the other book I recommend to anyone to read is this book, **The Cayman Islands in Transition—the Politics, History and Sociology of a Changing Society** by Roy Bodden, a former Member of this House. I know your book is coming out too, that is fine, Mr. Speaker; and the last book—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Yes, I know. The last book I would tell anybody to read, Mr. Speaker, is this one called, ***The Third Pillar: How Markets and the State Leave the Community Behind*** [by Raghuram G. Rajan]. I read this book prior to the election, and it actually put on my radar the Member for Savannah and our Honourable Premier—the Member for Newlands—when they went with the tagline, **“Community creates Country.”**

Mr. Speaker, this book is so profound, and I want to read someone who had a little praise. They said, **“The Third Pillar is a must-read for everyone seeking a way to preserve democracy as we have known it. In Rajan’s brilliant new perspective, successful democracies require balance between competitive markets, honest governments, and healthy local communities. But our communities have been ravaged by globalization and ICT. Restoration of that Third Pillar, is therefore the most essential task facing policy-makers today.”** That was Janet Yellen, former Fed Chair and now Treasury Secretary.

These are the kind of things that I stay up late at night to read, Mr. Speaker. The other day I left here early and had to come back because my eyes were killing me. I read to fall asleep. That is how it is. That is my winding down time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share something with you, when you get a chance. It is there anyway, you can Google it, but... it was an article that appeared in *The Atlantic* back in 2015, about the number of Americans who could not find \$400 if they had an emergency. Almost 2/3 of the American people, one of the richest countries on this planet, could not find \$400 if they had an emergency, and while we do not have a tax code or do those kinds of surveys, it made me wonder. It made me think: how many of our own people are in the same boat.

Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of thinking that went into putting this budget together. They argued about the \$22 million that is included for free school lunches, but do you know what nobody talks about, Mr. Speaker? That it is \$22 million less that Caymanian families have to find; \$22 million more for Caymanian families to spend on their families; to invest in their children. That same \$22 million ties back to the Member for North Side when he says we want to roll back the Planning Law, so that if people want to put even a little one-bedroom home on their house [sic] and rent it out, they can do so without the red tape. This is the kind of thinking that went into that budget.

Mr. Speaker, I also have the responsibility for Cayman Islands Development Bank and I intend to bring legislation to make changes to the bank so it can do a lot more; so, it can help our people. This is not about any crazy policies, this is about partnering with our people, because Mr. Speaker, I will be the first to tell you, the greatest friend to an employee is still an

employer. The private sector is the engine of this country and when people talk about being anti-development no, we are not anti-development. We are pro-sustainable development. That is the difference.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that we do need business people. We need investors, but I will be the first to tell you too, we have too many people in this country with money to be left behind by foreign investors coming in through the Local Companies Control Licensing (LCCL), or whatever process they call it now, and deny our own business people. We have many business people who work hard [and] have given to the community, and are struggling to compete with many of these people because they are coming from places where they can access certain capital that our people cannot have.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time that things in this country that are essential... the Government does not need to own them, but at a minimum, the Caymanian people and the Caymanian businesses need to own them. That is the difference; so, if you are a Caymanian business person, I can guarantee you have nothing to worry about. Those laws will benefit you. What we are pushing will benefit you. Equally, if you are a foreign investor and you want to come here to do business, all we are saying is you cannot cut down our mangroves, et cetera, to do it. You cannot destroy our beaches to do it. That is all we are saying.

Look at our most valuable piece of real estate, the Seven Mile Beach—look at the front page of the Compass today, Mr. Speaker. When we lose that, what do we have left for tourism? This is what this budget is about. It has to reflect our values. You know what, we do not have the pleasure or the luxury of saying somebody has to do it; if they are not doing it, we have to step up and do it—it needs to be done to preserve this for our children.

Mr. Speaker, in the next couple of months I am 49 you know? I have been at death’s door already. I wrote my obituary already. It is safe for me to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have more yesterdays than I do tomorrows, but I have three children and many people inside here have kids and grandkids. What we do inside here today, is not for us. Chris Saunders is fine; Shawnette Saunders is fine; Rose Saunders is fine; but it is our children and grandchildren’s time and, in the end, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to be remembered by what we inherit, we are going to be remembered by what we leave behind.

My job and the job of this Government is to leave behind a better Cayman than we found it. I want to thank the Opposition Members, Mr. Speaker, for their spirited contribution. I sat over there. I understand their role. It is part and parcel. It is politics. It is never personal. That is the way it is.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Premier, throughout the entire budget process I can tell you, the Ministers can tell you, I was very difficult to deal with. Never once, did the Premier ever come to me and say,

"Chris, ease up a little bit. Lighten up a little bit." He allowed me to go through—we met with every Minister one by one. We went through, *"Here is what you want; here is what you need; here is what we can juggle around."*

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, if you think that we are nice here, you should see us in Caucus, but what allows this Government to function, Mr. Speaker, is that we recognise that democracy itself recognises divisions and disagreements. What it says is that when we have dialogue and discussion, we find consensus. If we disagree on an issue, we do not carry that disagreement to another issue. That is the maturity of this Government.

We do not agree on every single thing and we would not. No husband and wife agree on everything, but we maintain respect and yes, tempers may flare, but to the Premier's credit—and I can tell you, if you think managing Chris Saunders, Kenneth Bryan and Jay Ebanks is easy, it is not. I do not know how the Premier does it sometimes, but he keeps his cool; he maintains it and I want to thank him.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, as I said—I do not know if I said it on mic or off-mic—the other day I had to check myself when I realised that, in one budget meeting, they said I lost it, I just thought I was being me, and Minister Bryan had to pull me one side.

He said, *"DP, you have a second? You have a second?"* I went through the process and he said, *"DP, I know you have a lot going on and this and that, but watch your blood pressure, watch your health; that's all I want to say to you—and do not do that to me in front of my staff again."* I said, *"No problem, Minister."* Then I said to myself, *"Boy, if Kenneth Bryan has to tell me to calm down sometimes..."*, I said, *"... I may have to look at myself."*

I look at Minister Turner: Brand-new Minister, passionate; every time I pull in her car is there, and many times when I am leaving, her car is there. She and her Chief Officer spend many hours, late at night, up in that office, working like crazy.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, most people do not know this: The Friday night after we delivered the budget, I had to go back to the Government building after 11pm and tell Minister Bryan to go home. He was still in there working, after we left here. He was back there in the office with the same striped tie and everything. I said, *"Man you need to go home. How long have you been in the same clothes now, man? You cannot be that fresh, go home!"*

I look at Minister Jay, I will not even put on mic our nickname for him, but I can tell you one thing, I am glad he and I are on the same side, because I would hate to be on the other side of him when he is ready to go off too.

Minister André, the Member for West Bay South: Compassionate, caring, and just outright, downright decent. You are not going to find—the first time that man caught my attention, Mr. Speaker, was when he sat right there in Public Accounts Committee and I was impressed. Ever since then, I have remained very impressed.

I look at Minister Bush, the Member for West Bay North. Mr. Speaker, I think this must be the hardest I have seen Bernie Bush work in his entire life, and Minister Bush and I go back a long way, but he works; he works. He goes off sometimes too, but he works.
[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I look at the Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for West Bay Central. If I do not get at least a daily call saying, *"DP, I need so and so..."*; *"DP, my constituency needs this..."* And she will nag me to death, until I call her constituency then and there and deal with it. She does not go away, and if I were a Member of her constituency, I would be glad—the woman is relentless when it comes to advocating for her people, and I am very grateful for that level of representation. The people of West Bay Central are very well served in that capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Savannah, God bless her. For all the long hours that I got tied up in that government building trying to get this budget out, the Member for Savannah has helped me so much in my constituency. *"DP, so and so called but I dealt with it for you, do not worry about it. I know you are busy."* That is team work. Caring, loving, and just passionate about what she does, and please whatever you do, do not make any mess around her. She is very serious when it comes to mess. She wants a beautiful Cayman.

Then, Mr. Speaker, you have the Member for East End. Now, I must admit, he does get on my nerves the most, because every single thing he comes and ask for it is for the people of East End. I have to keep reminding him sometimes, do you know we are part of the Government? We serve people outside of East End? But you know what, Mr. Speaker, well done to him, in terms of what it is he wants to do. He is passionate about his people and he is very East End centric.

Mr. Speaker, my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town East. All I can say to him is, "Welcome Home."

[Inaudible interjection and desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: He and I ran together in 2017. Many of the policies and the vision that we have for this country is included in this document, and I am happy that he is here and willing to come over and help us implement many of them, because I have no doubt they will be the best thing for this country.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there is a Member for Cayman Brac East, the political mother of the entire group. Nobody makes any major decision until they run in through the Member first. The knowledge that she has, and what she has achieved as a woman in an industry that is mostly dominated by men, is nothing short of phenomenal.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: And while she has said this is her last term, I am hoping between now and the next election, we can beg her to give us just one more term—

[Inaudible interjection and desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: —so we can finish what we want in Education.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss to leave out the two official members who are also our colleagues in Cabinet: The Honourable Attorney General (AG) and the Honourable Deputy Governor.

Mr. Speaker, I like the AG; he gets on my nerves sometimes, but I like the AG. He, as I have said on numerous occasions, represents what Cayman is about. I have seen him on my days when I started out at Lands and Survey, pulling his little brief case going to Court to prosecute people, to keep our roads safe. He is good man, a great counsel, and oh, if you ever get the chance to sit down and talk to him, I guarantee it is going to be the best; [a] dedicated, hard-working public servant.

The Deputy Governor has been—almost 40 years next year, I believe? 40 years next year. That in itself, Mr. Speaker, speaks of commitment and we have had many disagreements because every time I have a problem with the civil servants, I go to the Deputy Governor; and he has to find a way to balance it, and I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, it is a skill. It is a skill, but you know what? We are grateful for his counsel. I am grateful for his support, and as I said before, even before being elected, whenever we would call him, he either answers or calls back. That is how he is, very professional; and I do enjoy working with him.

Mr. Speaker, I must also highlight the Governor. He has a temperament that I have come to like, a consummate diplomat; and he genuinely loves this country. I cannot say enough other than the support that he has given this Government and I am really grateful for that; and his wife, Lizzy, decent people; different, and they mean this country well.

Mr. Speaker, on the time I have left, I want to thank you. Last night when you called, you reminded me of when I called you back in 1997—first of all, any man who can remember a phone call back in 1997, something's gotta be wrong with them.

At the time, I was Student Government President at PACE [University]. I was having some problem,

and the only politician I knew, that I could probably call for advice was McKeever. Now, these were the days before cell phones were what they are [now], but I used to travel with a Cayman telephone book; so, I went and looked up his number, found it, and around 11 o'clock at night I just called him. He answered and gave me some pretty good advice.

[Last night] he said, *“DP, just remember when you come there, do not get caught up in all that crazy stuff. The country needs stable leadership. The country needs positivity. Do not follow the Member for Red Bay...”* although that is not the term he used, but, *“...just stay positive and reflect the Government's values.”*

I want to thank you for that, and for the eggs and callaloo that you send to the house too. I am grateful for that, too.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Yeah, and do not worry. We are going to take care of your people in West Bay West. We know you sit there and you are limited, so we will take care of your people.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: We will take care of people, do not worry about that. We have money in the budget there for it.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank the people of Bodden Town West. They have entrusted me twice now with their vote to be their voice. Barring the birth of my children and the marriage to my wife, I would probably say it is probably one of the highlights of my life, was the good Lord to call me home anytime soon.

I really want to thank them, and while the last seven months, I may not have been as visible as I used to be—again, working on putting together the budget, because now I will have much work to do—I really want to thank them for their patience and let them know, as soon as we are done with Finance Committee, I will come around. I will look at all the COVID protocols I need to go, to make sure, but I am looking forward to seeing them for Christmas.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank my family. They have given the most and they have been the most understanding. I mean, I have been fortunate that my youngest is 14 and a little bit more understanding. The other two are in college, and I know they are watching right now because by the time you pick up the phone, they are going—my daughter especially, the one who wants to be a judge, is going to send me some WhatsApp message: *“Daddy, you too teary,”* or, *“You're too mushy.”* That kind of stuff there, but that is what a daughter does, and she is still the reason every man should have a daughter.

I am proud, Mr. Speaker, to stand with these Members on this side. I am proud to be the representative of Bodden Town West. I am proud of what we have done in the seven months and change that the people have entrusted us so far, and I am really looking forward to the next two years, where we can work with every single Member of this House, including the Opposition, because we know that they also serve a purpose in our democracy and they also represent people; and I know, at the end of the day, they also mean people well.

We may have disagreements on policies but we all equally love our beloved Cayman Islands and with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you and I am going to ask everyone to support this budget.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question, is that a Bill entitled the Appropriation (Financial Years 2022 and 2023) Bill, 2021, be given a second reading.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Appropriation (Financial Years 2022 and 2023) Bill, 2021 was given a second reading.

The Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to steal 30 seconds of your time.

Tomorrow and Sunday are special days in my family as it is my mother's birthday tomorrow and my daughter's birthday on Sunday, so I just want to wish them a happy, happy, birthday and I will try my best to make them happy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Oh yes, thank you. Already contributing. I also would like to let the public know that as a part of our reopening, things are rolling already; tomorrow Air Canada returns to the Cayman Islands, so many good news to happen. We hope that all of those Canadian Caymanians will continue to see their loved ones coming in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

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

I would say the whole House, certainly everybody on this side joins with the Minister for Tourism in

wishing his mother and daughter happy birthdays tomorrow and on Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all Members who have participated and contributed today—we have had some very good contributions. It is late in the evening for us now and we will be having Finance Committee on Monday so, Mr. Speaker, at this time I will move the adjournment of this honourable House until after the completion of Finance Committee. Hopefully that will not be too long.

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Although the Speaker cannot speak, I would say that I asked for things that are not in the budget, so I hope that the money will be found for them.

The question is, that this honourable House stands adjourned until the completion of Finance Committee. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, no.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

This honourable House stands adjourned until the completion of Finance Committee.

At 7:42pm the House stood adjourned until the completion of Finance Committee.