



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Fourth Meeting of the 2023/2024 Session
Fourth Sitting

Thursday
25 July, 2024
(Pages 1-71)

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

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

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	<i>Acting Premier</i> , Acting Minister of Finance, Minister of Financial Services & Commerce and Investment, Innovation & Social Development
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	<i>Acting Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of Tourism & Ports
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development
Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports and Heritage
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, OCI, JP, MP	Minister of Border Control & Labour and Culture

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon	<i>Acting Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, KC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

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

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands

APOLOGIES

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> and Minister of Finance, Education and District Administration & Lands
Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert Hon, JP	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service

EDITED HANSARD REPORT
FOURTH MEETING OF THE 2023/2024 SESSION
THURSDAY
25 JULY, 2024
12:51 P.M.
Fourth Sitting

[Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Parliament is resumed. I will ask the honourable Member for George Town West to grace us with prayers.

PRAYERS

Mr. David C. Wight, Elected Member for George Town West: Good afternoon.

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

Bless our Sovereign, King Charles, III; William, Prince of Wales and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace and happiness; truth and justice; religion and piety may be established among us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands, the Premier, the Speaker of Parliament, the Leader of Opposition, Ministers of the Cabinet, ex officio members and Members of 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 all 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 trust us 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: Amen. Please be seated.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR
AFFIRMATIONS**

The Speaker: None.

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

Official visit by
The Rt. Honourable Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP,
Speaker of the House of Commons
in the United Kingdom

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I have the great honour and privilege to share with you this morning, and with the listening public, that Parliament will be hosting an official visit next week by the Right Honourable Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP, the Speaker of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.

This visit marks the first occasion that a Speaker of the UK Parliament has made an official visit to the Cayman Islands; and it is a testament to the importance that Sir Lindsay places on the Overseas Territories' sixteen jurisdictions including the Cayman Islands, Montserrat, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and others. In honour of this special occasion in Cayman's parliamentary history, a Special Meeting of the House will be convened next Thursday, 1st August at 10:30 am, here at the Parliament.

Sir Lindsay is the 158th Speaker of the House of Commons, having first been elected into this position by his colleagues in November 2019. He recently won his seat again in the elections held on 4th July, and was re-elected as Speaker of the House of Commons for a second term on the 8th July. He has a long and illustrious career in the UK Parliament, having served on several committees as well as being elected as the Chairman of Ways and Means for nine years— a senior Member of the House of Commons who acts as one of the Speaker's three deputies.

Throughout his parliamentary career and particularly in his senior role of Speaker, Sir Lindsay has been a fierce and loyal advocate for the Overseas Territories, elevating our voice in Westminster. I have known Sir Lindsay for many years. My friendship with

Sir Lindsay is built on a shared commitment to fostering strong diplomatic ties between our parliaments.

When I last saw Sir Lindsay, it was in March of this year for the 75th Commonwealth celebrations. He held an official dinner in his residence for Speakers of the Overseas Territories where we discussed the challenges that we face, some of which are shared; others unique to us, notably, our disaster risk management, security and our environmental sustainability. It was there that I was reminded of his remarkable dedication to serving not only his constituents, but also the House in his position as Speaker ensuring that the principles and procedures of the House are upheld fairly and responsibly.

I was also reminded, and indeed struck, by the true dedication he has to honouring the Overseas Territories. On May 9th, 2023, Sir Lindsay unveiled a new stained-glass window in the Speaker's House at Westminster. This window was dedicated to the territories and includes the Coats of Arms of all of the territories, including Cayman's, beautifully surrounded by the Coats of Arms of each of the other territories, which he called "**part of our United Kingdom family**".

Honourable Members, I look forward to welcoming Sir Lindsay to the Cayman Islands and to showcasing our rich culture and history for him. I look forward to this Special Meeting next week and hope that you will extend a warm welcome to him as well. His visit highlights you and your work. It highlights our Parliament, our Government, and our country. It is a unique opportunity to participate in this great relationship that we are honoured to share with the United Kingdom Parliament.

Honourable Members, all of us would be aware that we are starting today's Sitting at almost 1 p.m. Today (Thursday), is the day when Private Members' business should take precedence over Government business, but events conspire and we have to go with the flow. I've had an extensive discussion with the Honourable Acting Premier, and I hope Members will agree with the approach that we have collectively agreed on as to how to finish the remaining business on the parliamentary agenda.

On the current Order Paper, there are twenty-four reports to be Laid, which will take a while. There are also nine statements, which run to ninety-one pages, so even if I say only one minute per page, that's an hour and a half. It's more like 2.5 hours before we get to the four Private Members' Motions, and that's not even taking into account the Parliamentary Questions. It's not difficult to realise that if we go down that particular road, we won't get any Private Members' Motions dealt with at all today.

There's also the matter of the Motion regarding the Electoral Boundary Commission's report, which is another important bit of Government business, so the Honourable Acting Premier and I have had to concede that it is impossible to complete the Government's

agenda today and we will not try to, therefore, this is the way we are going to approach it.

After discussion with both the Honourable Acting Premier and Minister Ebanks-Wilks, I have agreed to allow two statements to proceed today because of their importance with respect to timing. One from Minister Turner, which relates to a Section 11(5) statement— of course, we're finishing up the business of Finance Committee with respect to the 2022-2023 year; and Minister Ebanks-Wilks' statement which relates to ReGen, as there's a Parliamentary Question dealing with it today.

The reports will be laid as indicated on the Order Paper, then Parliamentary Questions before the two statements, and then we'll get into the Private Members' Motions but we are going to ensure— and it is my responsibility to ensure it— that all Members have full and fair opportunity to present their business to the House. The Ministers, their statements, and the Private Members, their Parliamentary Questions and Private Members' Motions.

We're going to see how the day goes, but I want to assure Members that all business is going to be dealt with before this Meeting adjourns.

Right, enough from me.

Madam Clerk.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

The Speaker: Many.

Cayman Islands Expungement Board - Office of the Deputy Governor - Cayman Islands Government - 2021-2022 Annual Report

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon, ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Section 44 of the Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act (2018 Revision), I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament the 2021-2022 Annual Report for the Expungement Board. This particular annual report covers both the 2021 and 2022 calendar years.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor wish to speak thereto?

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, given the public interest in the particular work done by the Board.

The Speaker: Very well.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I wish to provide a very brief summary highlighting the 2021 and 2022 Annual Report for the Cayman Islands Expungement Board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the former Chairman of the Expungement Board, Mrs. Marilyn Brandt for her hard work, dedication and commitment to the work of the Board during her tenure and the period covered in this report; and many thanks as well to other dedicated board members.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, the Expungement Board was first established in 2018 with the enactment of the Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act. This is the Board's fourth annual report. The primary objective of the Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act is to implement a scheme to limit the effect of a person's conviction for a range of offences, if the person, having served his or her sentence, subsequently completes a period of crime-free behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Criminal Records (Spent Conviction) Act establishes that criminal records for certain convictions and offences can never be expunged, for example, treason, murder and child pornography.

Schedule 2 and Section 12 of the Act provides the full list of offences and convictions for which criminal records cannot be expunged; however, where the criminal record of a person has been expunged, the Act establishes that the person will be treated, for all purposes of the Act, as a person who has not committed the offence, been charged with the offence, been prosecuted for the offence, been convicted of the offence or been sentenced for the offence.

Mr. Speaker, in Schedule 4, the Act specifies certain professions and offices of employment where persons must disclose expunged criminal records.

Section 44 of the Criminal Records (Spent Convictions) Act requires the Board to submit an annual report containing the number of applications for expungement; the number of expungements of criminal records that the Board approved or disapproved, categorised by the offence for which they relate; and, if applicable, the district of residence of the applicant, among other information.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, for the 2021 and 2022 calendar years the Board processed 153 applications. Fifty-two applications were processed in 2021; this number almost doubled in 2022 with 101 applications processed that year. Of the 153 applications processed over the two years 114, or 75 per cent of those applications were deemed eligible and approved by the Board. The remaining 39 applications were deemed

ineligible for expungement as they did not meet the required crime-free period as stipulated in the Act.

Mr. Speaker, with every expunged record our citizens are given an opportunity for a fresh start in life. It is therefore rewarding to know that between 2021 and 2022, 114 individuals, having served their sentence and remain crime-free for the required period, have had their criminal records expunged.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Expungement Board are volunteers appointed by the Governor. They provide a very important service to our community. I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to the Chair and members of the Expungement Board. We look forward to their continued service in support of Second Chances and new opportunities for our citizens.

I would also like to acknowledge with gratitude the past service provided by Pastor Alson Ebanks, an inaugural Member of the Expungement Board, and to welcome new member Mr. Michael Bromby, who joined the Board in 2022. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the staff in the office of the Deputy Governor who provide secretariat services to the Expungement Board, for their support in its effective functioning.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

Cayman Islands Human Rights Commission - *Promoting, protecting and preserving human rights* - Annual Report – 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the 13th report of the Human Rights Commission. The report covers the period 1st January, 2022 to 31st December, 2022, in line with its constitutional mandate found in section 116(8) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor wish to speak thereto?

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, ever so briefly. During the 2022 reporting period, the Commission delved into the topic of migrants in relation to their arrival, handling, the asylum process, and the fair treatment of migrants in general.

The Commission also dedicated significant attention to providing feedback to the Law Reform Commission in its penal code reform discussion paper and discussed LGBTQ issues. Lastly, the Commission received, assessed and addressed queries and

complaints, including from our fellow Caymanians, in relation to human rights matters.

The report demonstrates that the Commission has continued its work to promote, protect and preserve the integrity of human rights values into everyday life by continuing to monitor human rights in policy, practice and legislation; developing strategies to build awareness through educational events and presentations; investigating alleged breaches or infringement of human rights by public officials; and engaging with civil society and the media.

I encourage members of the honourable House and the public to familiarise themselves with the contents of the report, which is available online at www.humanrightscommission.ky. I would like to take this opportunity to formally thank the outgoing former Chairperson, Mr. Dale Crowley and former Member, Miss Joni Kirkconnell for their service and valuable contributions to the Commission. I am grateful for their dedication and existing commission members' and their commitment to improving these Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

**The Twenty-Fourth Report of the Commission
for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) -
1 August 2022 – 31 January 2023**

**The Twenty-Fifth Report of the Commission
for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) -
1 February 2023 – 31 July 2023**

**The Twenty-Sixth Report of the Commission
for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) -
1 August 2023 – 31 January 2024**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, The 24th report of the Commission for the Standards in Public Life covering the period 1 August 2022 to 31 January 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: The 25th report of the Commission for Standards in Public Life covering the period 1 February 2023 to 31 July 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: The 26th report of the Commission for

Standards in Public Life covering the period 1 August 2023 to 31 January 2024.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does Honourable the Acting Deputy Governor wish to speak to the three reports?

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Mr. Speaker, just to thank the members of the Commission for Standards in Public Life for the stellar work that has been delivered under the Chairmanship of Dr. Sonia Bush.

I wish to remind Members that the period for filing of our annual declarations through the dedicated online Register of Interests portal is currently open with the deadline of 31st July, 2024; and to encourage members of this honourable House, and the public, to familiarise themselves with the excellent work of the Commission for Standards of Public Life. The report is online at www.standardsinpubliclifecommission.ky.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

**Cayman Islands Government – 2023 Portfolio of
the Civil Service Annual Report**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the annual report for the Portfolio of the Civil Service as at 31st December 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor wish to speak thereto?

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Portfolio of the Civil Service (PoCS) has three strategic areas of delivery:

- HR policy;
- Public sector reform; and
- Good governance.

It is comprised of the Office of the Deputy Governor; our core Portfolio of policy and administration within the Portfolio; the Civil Service College; the Management Support Unit; the Strategic and Corporate HR Unit— which includes payroll, data and job evaluation teams; the Cayman Islands National Archives; the Commissions Secretariat; the Internal Audit Service; the Elections Office; the Office of Education Standards; and the Passport and Corporate Services Office.

Management Support Unit

Mr. Speaker, in 2023 the Portfolio of the Civil Service delivered numerous programmes to modernise the Civil Service and to pursue our joint vision to be a world class organisation. To ensure seamless continuation of the Civil Service's Strategic Plan, the Management Support Unit led a civil service strategy refresh. The new Civil Service Strategic Plan was launched this year, and aims to embed past successes, sharpen focus on priority areas of public sector reform, and provide greater clarity regarding the relationship between the Civil Services Strategic Plan and Government's priorities.

Commissions Secretariat

Mr. Speaker, a world class result for the entire country was surely the removal of the Cayman Islands from the Financial Action Task Force grey list. This remarkable achievement was aided by the Commissions Secretariat's investigative team through the provision of evidence on behalf of the Anti-Corruption Commission, demonstrating the jurisdiction's investigations and successful prosecution of various offences.

Strategic and Corporate HR Unit

In 2023, the Portfolio's policy team delivered policy proposals to enhance existing maternity and paternity leave benefits for civil servants. This work aimed to position the Civil Service as an employer of choice, offering family leave packages which are highly competitive and supportive of our workforce, 55 per cent of whom are women. The project, which was completed in the first quarter of 2024, culminated in changes to our personnel regulations, increasing both maternity and paternity leave entitlements which will ultimately afford civil servant parents additional time and money to be at home, establishing strong bonds with their infants. It is hoped that our leadership in this area will serve as a catalyst for other workplaces, generating support for local families.

Mr. Speaker, also in 2023 the Portfolio embarked on the second year of its multi-phased project to implement the new HR management system, my-VISTA, for the Civil Service. A range of analytics were delivered for the HR profession, enabling them to better manage employee data and HR-related expenditure. Improvements were also achieved by transitioning employee medical eligibility management to the new system which provided employees with the ability to view, in real-time, their medical dependents. This change resulted in a reduction in the number of eligibility queries and better facilitated dependent management.

Additionally, extensive work was undertaken to prepare for the launch of the payroll module which is the single largest module in the my-VISTA system. Working collaboratively with finance leaders, heads of department and HR leaders, opportunities were seized to improve business processes within the Civil Service,

in parallel with upgrading our CIG HR system capabilities. As part of that preparatory work, our finance colleagues adopted electronic payments for CIG monthly payrolls and HR leaders migrated almost all employees onto monthly payroll, rapidly moving CIG towards the elimination of some 26 bi-weekly pay activities per annum.

For the seventh consecutive year, the Portfolio of the Civil Service conducted the annual employee engagement survey which has yielded responses from 3,756 civil servants, or 83 per cent of our workforce. Notably, this was the highest number of participants since the survey was launched in 2017 and as per the 2023 results, the engagement index—which is a measure of the average level of engagement across all Civil Service entities, and provides us with the ability to benchmark against other jurisdictions—has held steady at 73 per cent.

Gains were realised in seven survey categories, namely, my work, organizational objectives and purpose, my team, leadership and managing change, resources and workload, inclusion and fair treatment and learning and development, each experiencing increases between 1 to 3 per cent. The statement *"I feel proud to be a civil servant"* achieved a high score of 88 per cent of our workforce, which is a percentage that makes Civil Service leaders quite proud.

During 2023, the Portfolio continued to make lives better by funding the participation of three persons in the Second Chances Programme, which is a programme designed to provide ex-offenders who meet certain criteria, access to employment opportunities within the Civil Service. Two participants were paired with job opportunities in the Department of Planning and one joined the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, another talent management programme within the offerings of the Civil Service is the Emerging Talent Programme which provides opportunities for persons to gain practical experience as they are seeking to enter the workforce. Under this programme, three Caymanians were recruited or seconded to gain experience in their respective fields with two of them having been confirmed in permanent positions as of the date of this report.

Civil Service College

Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, the Civil Service College continued to assist with upskilling employees and over 100 civil servants achieved internationally recognised City & Guilds ILM qualifications in leadership and management, ranging from level two to level seven, which is a postgraduate equivalent qualification.

Additionally, civil servants completed over 7,600 LinkedIn Learning courses, reflecting over 8,000 hours of online learning. The learning and development initiatives undertaken by the Civil Service College continued to make a positive impact across the Civil Service, as confirmed by a 3 per cent increase in the

learning and development category within our employee engagement survey. This was the third consecutive year in which the learning and development score increased by 3 per cent, demonstrating the effectiveness of our Civil Service College initiatives and programmes.

In April 2023, the Deputy Governor's 5K Challenge was held once again, drawing high numbers of participants across all three Islands and raising money to assist very worthy causes. Approximately \$82,000 was raised and shared among three charities, specifically the Cayman Islands Red Cross, Loud Silent Voices and United against Bullying Foundation.

Office of the Deputy Governor

In the Office of the Deputy Governor, the team developed and issued a governance and management circular entitled CIG Guidance: Third Party Risk, and facilitated in-person awareness sessions for civil servants. They also delivered the pilot implementation of the guidance on remuneration of members of public bodies in the Cayman Islands, which is intended to promote an equitable and reasonable system of remuneration, promote consistency of decision making, and enhance transparency in public spending.

Strategic Reforms Implementation Unit

Mr. Speaker, to continue to build competency in the areas of business case development and change management, the Strategic Reforms Implementation Unit (SRIU) facilitated another successful year of professional-certification programmes with sixty-two civil servants earning a combined total of 103 professional certifications in the areas of business case development, project management and change management. Senior leaders also completed master classes in project leadership, benefits realisation and risk management.

Also, during the year, the Portfolio's shared-services team worked closely to support Her Excellency the Governor, and the newly-established Police Service Commission by providing assistance with recruitment activities for the ranks of Chief Superintendent and Commissioner of Police of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS).

Mr. Speaker, in the area of pay and rewards, the PoCS facilitated the payment of a one-off \$1,500 honorarium which was paid to all civil servants in December 2023, and for which we are most grateful for the Government's support. In addition, on behalf of the Deputy Governor, PoCS implemented a one-off, performance-based reward of one additional leave day for high-performing civil servants who scored three or higher on their annual performance assessments. Additionally, targeted pay guidance was provided to one key job family within our Civil Service to help them stem issues of attraction and retention of talent.

Office of Education Standards (OES)

Mr. Speaker, a significant achievement of the Office of Education Standards (OES) during 2023 was the development of a bespoke early childhood inspection framework, aptly titled First Steps to Success: Nurturing Environments and Thriving Children. The creation of this framework was accomplished through partnership with an international early-years consultant, and by securing cross-sectoral support from key local groups and government entities.

To ensure success, a series of familiarisation sessions were offered to school leaders and staff to ensure all stakeholders had a comprehensive understanding of the framework before its integration into the inspection process; and we are very proud to report over 110 educators attended. The work of the OES, sir, continues to do us proud as it is a way of ensuring, no matter the means of any families, that we have an equal yardstick for the way that we measure the performance of schools across the Cayman Islands' public and private sector, and their work continues to yield positive results.

Cayman Islands National Archives

To strengthen the ongoing promotion and accessibility of the historical collections in 2023, the Cayman Islands National Archives expanded their oral history and outreach programmes through the launch of video recordings of oral history interviews to supplement their audio recordings; highlights included an exit interview with the previous Governor Martin Roper. The Archives also developed and produced forty-nine social media posts showcasing the oral history and outreach programmes and spotlighting various types of records forming the historical collections, in concert celebrating historically significant persons, organisations, anniversaries, and events.

Internal Audit Service

Mr. Speaker, to further strengthen good governance, the Internal Audit Service established a new audit charter and refreshed its audit methodology and reporting template. Importantly, to aid professional development and advancement within that organisation, the Internal Audit Service developed career frameworks for all roles within the unit.

Passport and Corporate Services Office

Our colleagues at the Passport and Corporate Services Office recorded major milestones in 2023, including the launch of the legislation and Governor's Special Marriage Licence electronic system which went live in February 2023, eliminating manual work flows. The Passport Office also introduced the online

verification of Apostilles in August, which facilitates the verification of Apostilles around the world. This brings the Cayman Islands in line with other countries who are members of The Hague's 1961 Apostille Convention.

Mr. Speaker, as the Acting Deputy Governor and head of this diverse organisation, I feel immensely proud of the men and women across the Portfolio of the Civil Service who lend their skills day in and day out to make lives better for the people of the Cayman Islands. The Portfolio's respective teams delivered some outstanding results in 2023, all of which enhance the experience of customers, both internal and external. The work of the Portfolio has introduced efficiencies, modernised our HR system, commenced the process of future-proofing the Civil Service, and enhanced our attractiveness as an employer.

Mr. Speaker, 2023 proved that the Civil Service is more than capable of producing remarkable results. I have no doubt that our five-year strategic plan played a significant role in positioning the Civil Service to grow from strength to strength. I am confident that our refreshed strategy will take us further along our journey of being a world-class organisation, and I sincerely look forward to celebrating every Civil Service win along the way as we make lives better for those we serve.

I want to express my sincere thanks to the diverse teams across our entire Portfolio for their extreme hard work and dedication; and the passion that they demonstrate in all that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
HSA Outpatient Pharmacy Services
(November 2021) – April, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
"Information and Communications Technology
Authority 2015/16 Accounts" - April, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
Follow-Up on Past PAC Recommendations 2022 –
Report 1 (January 2022) - February, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:**

**Follow-Up on Past PAC Recommendations
2023 – Report 1 (March 2023) - February, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
"Financial Reporting of the Cayman Islands
Government General Report 31- December-2021
and 31 December-2020" - April, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
"Government's Shift to Online Services"
(June 2022) - April, 2024**

**The Government Minute -
The Government's Response to the Report of the
Standing Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on
the Report of the Auditor General entitled:
"Follow Up on Past PAC Recommendations 2022 -
Report 2 (Feb 2022)" - April, 2024**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, in accordance with Section 77(7) of the Standing Orders, the following reports:

The Government Minute, the Cayman Islands response to the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: HSA Outpatient Pharmacy Services (November 2021);

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: "Information and Communications Technology Authority 2015/2016 Accounts";

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: Follow up on past PAC recommendations 2022 - Report 1 (January 2022) through February, 2024;

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: "Follow up on past PAC recommendations 2023 - Report 1";

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: "Financial Reporting of the Cayman Islands Government General Report 31 December, 2021 and 31 December, 2020";

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: "Government's Shift to Online Services" done in June 2022; and

The Government Minute, the Government's response to the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Auditor General entitled: "Follow up on past PAC recommendations 2022 – Report 2.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Acting Deputy Governor wish to speak to the many reports?

The Acting Deputy Governor, Hon. Gloria McField-Nixon: Ever so briefly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Government Minutes provide management's responses to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee. Chief Officers provide updates on the reports relevant to their Ministries and the Office of the Deputy Governor coordinates these responses. Admittedly, it has taken some time to coordinate responses from the relevant agencies; however, I am pleased to report that we have brought the Government Minutes up to date, with the exception of two which are still being finalised.

I want to assure this honourable House that providing timely responses remains our priority. To this end, bespoke resources have been allocated within the Office of the Deputy Governor specifically to coordinate these responses, and prepare them for Cabinet's approval and submission to this honourable House.

It is important that Members of this House and the general public are provided with written updates to the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee. These updates not only inform us of the progress and implementation of various initiatives, but also highlight areas where further attention and improvement are needed. By doing so, we can ensure that Government actions are aligned with the best interests of the public, and that any issues are addressed effectively.

This practice is not merely a procedural requirement, it is a cornerstone of transparent governance and accountability. Transparency in our actions reinforces public trust in the Civil Service. I recognise that when the public sees the Civil Service is open and forthcoming with information, it builds a stronger, more engaged community. The Civil Service deeply values these opportunities to reflect on, and improve our processes, and we remain committed to the successful and timely implementation of the recommendations put forward by the Public Accounts Committee.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Office of the Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee, as the rigorous scrutiny and constructive feedback provided by these bodies is invaluable in helping us to uphold the highest standards of public administration. I would also like to thank Chief Officers

and their dedicated teams for their efforts in providing responses and, indeed, for progressing the recommendations set out in those reports.

Finally, many thanks to the team within the Office of the Deputy Governor, for taking the lead to ensure these Minutes were delivered.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Deputy Governor.

**The Cayman Islands Law Reform Commission –
Annual Report No. 19 –
1st April 2023 - 31st March 2024**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to lay on the Table of this House, the Annual Report for the Law Reform Commission for the period 1st April, 2023 to 31st March, 2024.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: No, Mr. Speaker, the report is self-explanatory.

I commend it to honourable Members and to the public, and I again thank the commissioners for their stellar work during the relevant reporting period.

I thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Very well.

**Anti-Corruption Commission - Cayman Islands –
Annual Report - 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023**

The Speaker: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of the House, the Annual Report of the Anti-Corruption Commission that covers the period 1 July, 2022 to the 30 June, 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Mr. Speaker, just to say thanks to the commissioners and, in particular, thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Mr. Gus Pope, for his Chairmanship during the relevant period. Thanks, also, to the incoming Chair, Mr. Charles Jennings, for agreeing to serve as Chair of the Commission.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Very well.

**Cayman Islands Government –
Portfolio of Legal Affairs - Annual Report 2023**

The Speaker: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg on the Table of the House, the Annual Report for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs for the reporting period ending December 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered, does the Honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: No, Mr. Speaker, except to thank the staff of the portfolio for their professionalism and hard work during the period.

The Speaker: Very well.

Cayman Islands Judiciary – Annual Report 2023

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of the House, the Annual Report of the Judiciary for the relevant reporting period, ending December 2023. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Mr. Speaker only to, again, commend the work of the judiciary, ably led by the Honourable Chief Justice and her colleague. Thank you.

The Speaker: Very well.

**2023 Annual Report – Office of the Director of
Public Prosecutions – Cayman Islands**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table the Annual Report of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for the period ending December, 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Member wish to speak thereto?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Mr. Speaker, again, just to commend the report to Members and the public, and thank the staff there for their work during the reporting period. Thank you.

The Speaker: Very well.

**Report of the Standing Finance Committee
on the Appropriation changes in accordance
with Section 25 of the Public Management and
Finance Act (2020 Revision) for the Financial Year
ending 31 December, 2023 – Supplementary
Appropriation (January 2023 to December 2023)
Bill, 2024 (Wednesday, 24th July, 2024)**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Premier and Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier, Acting Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Minister of Financial Services & Commerce and Investment, and Innovation & Social Development, Elected Member for West Bay South: Good afternoon and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the report of the Standing Finance Committee on the Supplementary Appropriation (January 2023 to December 2023) Bill, 2024, which is in respect of the Government's financial year that ended on 31st December, 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered. Honourable Acting Minister of Finance, do you wish to speak to the report?

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, very briefly.

In accordance with Standing Order 64(7), the Standing Finance Committee agreed that I submit to this honourable House, the report of the Committee on the Supplementary Appropriation (January 2023 to December 2023) Bill, 2024 with respect to the Government's financial year ended 31st December, 2023.

In terms of meetings, Mr. Speaker, the Committee met yesterday, the 24th July, 2024, during which meeting, the requested appropriations on the Schedule to the Bill were considered. The Committee also met earlier this morning to finalise and approve its report, which has just been Tabled.

The Speaker: I should say so ordered.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Just to wrap up, the Committee considered the Schedule to the Bill and approved the Appropriation changes requested thereon; however, Mr. Speaker, the committee agreed

to add one Appropriation with a value of \$160,280 to the Schedule to the Bill. The significant items on the Schedule to the Bill can be summarised as follows:

- Increase in health care costs for indigents, seafarers and veterans;
- Local and overseas scholarships and education services;
- land acquisitions; and
- Major road works and upgrades to road services.

Mr. Speaker, I summarised the significant appropriation changes included in the Bill when I presented the Bill, so I don't think there's a need to repeat those for the record. As the proceedings in Finance Committee were publicly aired, and can still be viewed online, there isn't a need for me to present much greater detail, other than to thank all the Members for their due consideration [and] their hard work.

I state that the Committee agreed that the report that has just been laid on the Table of this honourable House be the report of the Standing Finance Committee on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill (January 2023 to December 2023) Bill, 2024 with respect to the financial year ended 2023.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Premier.

Electoral Boundary Commission Report – 2023

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Acting Premier.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you Mr. Speaker. I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Electoral Boundary Commission Report 2023.

The Speaker: So ordered. Does the Honourable Acting Premier wish to speak thereto?

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: At this point very briefly, Mr. Speaker, to thank the Commission for their challenging work as outlined in the Constitution. I'll speak in greater detail in respect of the Government Motion related to the report which you foreshadowed in your opening comments to the proceedings today, and I'll have more extensive discussion at that point.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Premier.

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to ask question number 25.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I'm sorry, we are way past 11 o'clock.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Clerk. We need a Motion to suspend Standing Orders 23(7) and (8), in order that questions may be put to Ministers after the hour of 11 o'clock.

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

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend Standing Orders 23(7) and 23(8), so questions can be put after the hour of 11 am.

The Speaker: Thank you. The question is that Standing Orders 23(7) and (8) be suspended, in order that questions may be asked of Ministers after the hour of 11 o'clock. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

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

NO. 25 UPDATE ON THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR GRAND CAYMAN

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

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question No. 25 which reads: Can the Honourable Minister update the House on the progress with the design and implementation of a new public transportation system for Grand Cayman?

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development, Elected Member for North Side: You shortened my title, sir.

The Speaker: Yes, just the relevant ones.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure,

[Transport and Development] has developed a comprehensive plan, presented in the form of a green paper, which outlines both short-term and long-term measures. These measures, recently reviewed and approved by Cabinet, include the following:

- Short-term Measures:
 - improving the public bus information;
 - enhancing the reliability of the existing public bus system;
 - upgrading the service in the Eastern districts which is to start with a pilot programme;
 - Rolling out and adopting a taxi booking app.
- Long-term Measures:
 - introducing a new public bus network servicing through three key arterial routes;
 - purchasing new buses to support the new network;
 - developing the necessary infrastructure for the new network including bus depots, terminals and shelters;
 - implementing bus priority measures;
 - transitioning to an integrated and digital ticketing model;
 - exploring changes to the sector's operating model.

The Ministry is now actively working on systematically implementing these measures to provide immediate relief to the public and pave the way for our new public transportation system.

Supplementaries

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

Mr. Speaker, can the—

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: You need to stand up.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: We spent so much time in Committee yesterday; I was still in Finance Committee.

Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Leader.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Through you, Mr. Speaker; if the Honourable Minister could clarify for me the integrated and digital ticketing model. Are they going to a card system of some sort— you're speaking about paying the fare, not digital ticketing for the enforcement.

The Speaker: The Minister to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Yes, sir. That is correct.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, you need to respond through the mic, because the rest of us can't hear.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, that is correct. We are looking into creating a transportation payment system because we want to look at transportation a little differently ensuring that we actually try to extend transportation into the late night and early morning hours. From talking to some of the taxi operators, I know that one of their concerns is carrying cash on them so late at night and in the early mornings.

We want to be able to make this transition to get buses on an on-time system but also, to get them to the eastern side of the island [early] in the mornings necessary to get people to work there.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Are there any further supplementaries?

Madam Clerk.

NO. 26

UPDATE ON SECURING A THIRD UNDERSEA CABLE

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question No. 26, standing in my name, to the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development. Can the Honourable Minister update the House on the progress with the project to secure a third undersea cable serving the Cayman Islands?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, following a thorough procurement process, the Ministry contracted Cambridge Management Consulting in November 2023 to help with the Submarine Cable Modernisation project. The advisory firm reviewed previous analyses and assessed potential industry partners and stakeholders.

Preliminary recommendations and a costed project plan were presented to Caucus in March 2024. Caucus then instructed further engagement with potential industry partners and evaluation of alternative partnership and delivery models. An interested party has submitted an offer to connect the Cayman Islands to a

multinational system, and a cabinet paper is being prepared for consideration.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Supplementaries? The Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Supplementaries

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

Mr. Speaker, through you; I thank the Minister for the response. There was much said here, but not said. First off, can the Minister confirm whether the Cabinet rejected or accepted the advisory report from Cambridge?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I will read it again: “... in March of 2024 Caucus then instructed further engagement with potential industry partners and evaluation of alternative partnership and delivery models. An interested party has submitted an offer to connect the Cayman Islands to a multinational system, and a cabinet paper is being prepared for consideration.”

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Honourable Deputy Leader.

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

I thank the Honourable Minister for that answer. Am I then to accept that the recommendation from Cambridge was that Caucus should engage with potential industry partners and evaluate an alternative partnership and delivery model, versus the Government doing it themselves?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I think I answered that just now, twice.

The Speaker: I'm not sure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: You're not sure?

The Speaker: No.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Do you want me to read it for the third time?

The Speaker: No, Minister; we're not playing games.

I didn't understand that to be answering the supplementary question which the Deputy Leader asked. It simply says that it has gone to Caucus and that a Cabinet paper will be prepared, but that's not an answer to the question. It's yes or no, really.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I've answered the question on what I thought he asked for. As I said, there's a paper going into Cabinet, I don't know what will happen once it gets there. I'm waiting for the last decision by Cabinet, before I put out any more information on this.

The Speaker: Very well.
Madam Clerk.

NO. 27

PROGRESS MADE TO ADVANCE THE HOUSING INITIATIVES REFERENCED IN THE PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTIONS PASSED BY PARLIAMENT IN SEPTEMBER 2023

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question No. 27, standing in my name, to the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development. Can the Honourable Minister say what progress has been made to advance the housing initiatives referenced in the Private Member's Motion on incentivising the private sector to build affordable homes; and on reintroducing the Government-Guaranteed Home Assistance Mortgage Programme (GGHAM), which were passed by Parliament in September, 2023.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Housing to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, as the honourable House is aware, the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development is developing the Cayman Islands' first ever public and affordable Housing Policy and a 10-year Strategic Plan. The initiatives under this policy and plan aim to tackle issues such as how to incentivise the private sector to build affordable homes. This policy and plan are expected to be completed before the end of this year.

I am pleased to inform the honourable House that Cabinet has approved a new, modernised government mortgage guarantee programme. This programme features updated criteria that are in line with the current housing market, as it is extremely difficult, and I dare say impossible, for Caymanians to purchase a home at or below the \$200,000 mark (which was the maximum purchase price of a property under the GGHAM programme).

Discussions with financial institutions are underway, and the Ministry aims to launch this programme by year-end.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Supplementaries? *[Pause]*
Madam Clerk.

NO. 28
TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES FOR THE
SPOTTS SECTION OF SHAMROCK ROAD

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask question No. 28, standing in my name, to the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development. Can the Honourable Minister advise what, if any, traffic calming measures are planned for the Spotts section of Shamrock Road, given the number of traffic accidents and fatalities that have taken place there this year?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Infrastructure to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, the Spotts section of Shamrock Road is of particular concern due to its high number of traffic collisions and road fatalities. This has been a longstanding concern. Toward the end of last year, I met with the community to discuss their concerns and suggestions for improving road safety. After careful consideration by the National Road Safety Committee (NRSC), several traffic calming measures were implemented late last year and earlier this year.

The measures included:

- Improved lighting on the land side of the road;
- Installation of cat eyes to provide a clearer distinction between lanes and deter overtaking;
- Clearing of roadside sections to facilitate speed traps, thereby increasing police presence, visibility, and enforcement activity.

Additionally, through the National Road Safety Committee (NRSC), further measures are currently being implemented. These include:

- Continued enforcement by the police;
- Automated speed check signage;
- Lane separation in certain areas using delineators.

It should be noted that some of these measures required the NRA to purchase equipment which is now being installed. The NRA and the RCIPS will work closely to monitor the effectiveness of these measures.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Before I ask whether there are Supplementaries, it's been brought to my attention that we need to suspend Standing Order 23(6), in order that the Leader of the Opposition can ask more than three questions in the course of one day.

Suspension of Standing Order 23(6)

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker— though it's a little after the fact, we'll do it for good order. I move the Suspension of Standing Order 23(6), so that a Member, being the Leader of the Opposition, can ask more than three questions requiring an oral answer.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 23(6) be suspended, in order that the Leader of the Opposition may ask more than three questions of Ministers in the course of one Sitting. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: You don't seem so enthusiastic. The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 23(6) suspended.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementaries? Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Supplementaries

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

Mr. Speaker, I'll say to the Minister, I'm aware of the meetings that took place last year with the communities and the recommendations they made. Can you say whether any consideration has been given to reducing the speed limits along that road, because I'm aware that it is one change that the community in that area asked for?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Infrastructure to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I know that at the meeting that we had with the community, one of the recommendations that they made was reducing the speed on Shamrock Road. The Committee was actually looking at that, but I have not gotten an affirmative on whether we are going to reduce it at this time. I know at some part of the year they were looking at reducing it.

I think they wanted to get the section of the East-West Arterial Road up a little further, so that we could divert more of the traffic onto the main highway; and get the road connector down to Agricola Drive

where much of the traffic could actually get around the Newlands and Savannah area. We were going to look at reducing that.

I must say that much of the road works for the East-West Arterial Road has already started. We're at that round about now, to turn to go to Agricola Drive next.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Any further supplementaries? *[Pause]*
Madam Clerk.

NO. 29

UPDATE ON THE REGEN PROJECT, IN PARTICULAR WHETHER ANY DECISION HAS BEEN MADE; THE CURRENT PROJECT DATES; AND THE CURRENT LONG STOP DATE

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for Newlands.

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, Elected Member for Newlands: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask the question, standing in my name, on the Order Paper which is: Can the Honourable Minister update the House on the ReGen project, in particular:

- a) whether any decision has been made;
- b) what are the current project dates; and
- c) what is the current long stop date?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for Sustainability and Climate Resiliency to answer.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Minister of Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Elected Member for West Bay Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer the Member's question:

Following a recent meeting of the Cabinet, it was collectively decided that the Cayman Islands Government will begin taking the necessary steps to exit the project agreement with the Dart-led consortium in respect of the ISWMS [Integrated Solid Waste Management System] project, in an effort to find a more affordable option for our country. As such, no new project dates, including a new long stop date, have been set.

Achieving a modern, sustainable and affordable solid waste management solution for the Cayman Islands remains a key priority for the Government. I will be speaking to this more comprehensively in my statement to follow.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Any supplementaries? The Honourable Member for Newlands.

Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess we will await the terms of the statement from the Minister. Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Just to let Members of the House know that I've spoken to the Honourable Minister because, as I indicated, timing was an important factor in deciding which statements to allow today.

Immediately following this, she is going to make a comprehensive statement; we will discuss questions thereafter. I think it's a more productive use of our time than searching in the dark.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank you again.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency to make a statement.

Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

Update on the Integrated Solid Waste Management System or 'ReGen' Project

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, thank you again for the opportunity to make this statement with regards to the Integrated Solid Waste Management System, known to us parliamentarians as ISWMS, often referred to in the media as "ReGen"—and, for those persons who are listening, who may not be aware of either reference, I am referring to the project at the George Town landfill.

The purpose of my statement today is to provide the long-anticipated update on the George Town landfill project.

Mr. Speaker, when I became the Minister in November, 2023, the project agreement had only a matter of days remaining before the long stop deadline of 30th November, 2023; however, at that time, certain outstanding condition precedents from both the Government and the Dart Consortium were not achievable by 30th November. Not being able to meet this deadline meant that a new long stop date would need to be agreed upon between both parties, as well as a new date for financial close for the project.

After reviewing the project agreement, it was decided that before extending the long stop date and agreeing a new date of financial close, all of the elements of the project agreement would need to be considered. This decision was made to ensure that once a new financial close date was set, it would indeed be met.

Mr. Speaker, some examples of the condition precedents that remained to be agreed between the parties included:

- risk and insurance, that is, liability and indemnity issues; and
- local company control issues.

Additionally, the full business case for the project sets out that the power purchase agreement is to be signed on or prior to, the effective date of the project agreement. As such, this was originally one of the condition precedents of the project agreement. Upon reviewing the project agreement, it was determined that this particular condition had been removed.

Members were advised that the reason why the condition was removed was due to the fact that the negotiations relating to the power purchase agreement were becoming protracted and it was removed to avoid any further delay of closing with the project agreement. The matter was considered by the Members.

There was also a growing concern on the negotiations relating to the cost per kilowatt-hour. Cabinet was reliably informed that the Government had previously indicated to CUC that it was mindful to accept the proposed energy rate, or power purchase price, but with some caveats. As such, the mechanics around these caveats were still being discussed, which meant that a final price had not yet been agreed.

Essentially, Mr. Speaker, a fact to consider was that if we closed on the project agreement, we did not have a customer secured—the only customer on the island. Closing on the project agreement, before agreeing on a price for the power purchase agreement, could greatly limit the likelihood of securing a competitive price. What I mean is that, essentially, the Government would enter into a contract to sell energy and the only client to buy the energy, i.e. Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC), had not yet signed the agreement, so we'd be entering into the agreement to build a waste-to-energy facility with no confirmed power purchase agreement.

Mr. Speaker, from the completion of the outline business case in the procurement, it was always assumed that the power purchase price would be near to 15 cents per kilowatt-hour; however, even at the time of the approval of the full business case in July 2023, that energy purchase price had not been secured by the Government and the power purchase agreement, which should have been completed and signed long before the project agreement was signed, had still not been finalised.

In April 2024, Caucus conducted a holistic review of the ISWMS project from beginning to date including, but not limited to, discussions on topics such as value for money, land filling options going forward, fiscal sustainability or affordability, insurance thresholds and risk-share profile. Caucus members were also appraised of the options examined in the technical review during the outline business case stage that were actually used to determine the best strategy and solution for the long-term solid waste management challenges in the Cayman Islands at the time this project was being considered.

The options back then were:

- Option A - Do nothing, which was not a practical option at the initial assessment of the outline business case for several reasons, but still had to be considered in the assessment for completeness;
- Option B - Modern landfill delivery of a modernised, lined landfill, in-house, by the government.
- Option C - Delivery of the Integrated Solid Waste Management System by a public-private partnership for the construction of new waste-to-energy treatment facilities; and
- Option D - Delivery of an integrated solid waste management project in-house, with the Government as the general contractor and thus managing various subcontractors for the construction of similar, or the same new, waste-to-energy, facilities.

Following a recent meeting of the Cabinet, it was decided that the Cayman Islands Government should begin taking the necessary steps to exit the project agreement with the Dart-led consortium, in respect to the ISWMS project. The legal implications of the right to terminate were considered, and Cabinet was advised that in the event that the Government decided to exercise its right to terminate the project agreement, the parties will have no liability to each other except for any contractual liabilities accrued prior to termination of the project agreement.

The Speaker: Madam Minister, I truly hate to interrupt you, but Members are increasingly agitated. They don't have a copy of the statement, and it is very extensive...

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: It is extensive, Mr. Speaker, I agree—

The Speaker: If we could pause until we can sort it out.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: They were provided, I just want to let you know.

The Speaker: I'm not doubting you, but— here they come.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Madam Minister, you may resume.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I believe I paused on stating that the termination, however, does not affect Government's rights, obligations and liabilities under the land transfer agreement; and also, the early works agreements, which are separate from the project agreement—

The Speaker: Can you indicate what page, Madam Minister?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: My numbering is a little different because I have mine [printed] bigger. I think it's page three.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, put simply, this was decided because we need to find a more affordable option for our country.

The ISWMS project is a long-term project which has significant impact on the Government's forecast and fiscal compliance over the lifespan of the project. The long-term financial forecast sets out noncompliance with the principles of responsible management, which will severely restrict the Government's ability to make independent budgetary decisions, as it will be required to seek budget approval by the United Kingdom Government during the period of noncompliance.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't included in what Members see, but I wanted to make it clear, and I jotted this note, that the only way to remedy the situation of non-compliance in those forecasted areas where we don't comply, would be for the Government to increase revenue streams or limit capital projects; and with the high cost of living, this was not something that the Government was prepared to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the Members of this honourable House and the listening public, that this decision by Cabinet was not taken lightly. Achieving a modern, sustainable and affordable solid waste management solution for the Cayman Islands remains a key priority for the Government. We need to move away from landfilling as our main method of dealing with solid waste. It is essential to continued sustainable development of our country.

The wellbeing of our people, the health of our environment, and the continued growth of our communities and industries, all rely on our Islands having access to modern, safe, and sustainable waste management systems, so it is clear that we need a solution; but what has also become increasingly clear over the course of months and months of negotiations and analysis of dozens of outstanding condition precedents from when the project agreement was signed, back in March 2021, is that we need a solution that is affordable for our country, both now and in the future.

It was also clear to the Members of Caucus and Cabinet that the ISWMS project agreement that was signed in 2021 is not it; hence, the reason for the recent decision by the Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, the current administration could not, in good conscience, continue forward with a deal that would effectively saddle current and future generations with a project that would put undue financial strain and unacceptable levels of risk upon these Islands. We need a solid waste management solution

that is financially, environmentally and socially sustainable.

I would now like to share some important background information that will help explain why Cabinet came to this collective decision. I will conclude with updates as to the Government's next steps; what they will be in relation to the project, and what the public can expect to happen once the government and the Dart-led consortium have exited the project agreement.

Mr. Speaker, before I go further, I want to make it clear that Cabinet's recent decision was for the project team to take the necessary steps to exit the agreement in a way that would be agreeable to both sides. As Members will recall, in late March of 2021, just a few weeks before the general election, the Cayman Islands Government signed a project agreement to enter into a contract with Dart Consortium to design, build, finance, maintain and operate a new integrated solid waste management system for a 25-year period. Alongside this, but in a separate and legally binding agreement, the Government approved the Dart Consortium to undertake closure and remediation works to the George Town landfill.

In October 2021, the Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency was given the responsibility of managing the project to close. When this new project team took over the role for managing the project, it was discovered that there were dozens of condition precedents outstanding to be negotiated or agreed. Between October 2021, and when I took the role of Minister means it has been approximately two years of rigorous negotiations with the Dart-led Consortium and the Government.

It has been presented by some that the project agreement signed in March 2021 amounted to a fully negotiated contract that simply needed to be taken forward and executed by 30th September. That is not so, Mr. Speaker. Given the dozens of outstanding matters discovered from October 2021, it is no wonder that these negotiations have taken so long to finalise.

Although steady progress continued to be made, the financial close deadline and long stop date for the project agreement negotiations were moved several times in an effort by the Government and Dart to wrap up negotiations and move the project forward. Despite months and months of project meetings and several presentations, it became clear that the cost of the project and the risk profile that the Government was being asked to accept was untenable.

The ISWMS project was posed to be the most significant capital project our country has ever undertaken, and the level of negotiations taking place reflected that fact. All parties were working diligently to try to reach a consensus on the outstanding condition precedents and to navigate the challenges of the rising cost and supply chain interruptions. At the end of the day, the decision that was taken by Cabinet was based on facts and figures, and in the firm conviction that a more affordable solution is needed for our country. I'm

sure that there are many in our community who will be concerned about the amount of money, time—and resources—that has been spent on the project thus far, and what will happen next to ensure that this investment does not go to waste.

Mr. Speaker, a number of important steps have been taken over the past seven years since the Dart Consortium was announced in 2017 as the preferred bidder for the project. Following the Early Works Agreement signed in October 2020, the main mound at the George Town landfill was closed and has undergone important remediation works; between October 2020 - March 2024, the Government has spent approximately \$23 million on remediation works at the George Town landfill. Of this amount, approximately \$14 million has been spent under the Ministry of Sustainability from January 2022 to date. It is important to note that this agreement to facilitate the George Town landfill closure and remediation work is separate, and will continue regardless of the status of the ISWMS project.

The project has also resulted in a successful programme to process end-of-life vehicles for recycling overseas. To date, the Dart Consortium has processed over 35,000 short tons or 32 million kg of scrap metal for overseas shipping and recycling. Impactful changes were also made to land filling operations to ensure accurate measurement of waste volumes and effective waste cover to prevent odours and fires. Most importantly, the Government has learned much over the course of the project negotiations—insights which, we believe, will position us well to quickly tender a request for proposals for a new waste management solution.

As it relates to the money spent, we all know that there have been significant improvements to the dump and a number of mitigation measures, as I mentioned earlier, have been put in place to reduce the likelihood of fire and environmental damages. The remediation has also beautified the area, therefore this can be seen as a capital investment.

Mr. Speaker, although there are still a number of discussions to be had and decisions to be taken by Cabinet, the Government is reviewing and updating the National Solid Waste Management Policy and the strategic outline case for ISWMS, and we'll be preparing to tender a new request for proposals in due course. Knowing what we know now, we are confident in our ability to tender a new waste management solution that will be affordable for our country, now and into the future.

Some in our community will be asking, *do we really have time to go out and tender again for a new waste management solution?* The answer to that question is yes. Based on the forecast rate of waste input per month, the Department of Environmental Health (DEH), under the Ministry of Health, is confident in their ability to maximise the existing space at the George Town landfill until a new solution is determined. Barring a major debris-causing event such as a hurricane, the Department of Environmental Health expects to have

another five to six years of landfill space before reaching the 70-foot contour on the northwest mound of the landfill, when Phase Two of the George Town landfill remediation can begin.

Mr. Speaker, beyond all of those logistical concerns of space at the landfill, the reality is that we urgently need a modern, sustainable and affordable solid waste management solution. Even as we make small but steady steps towards limiting the importation of single-use plastics into our Islands, our recycling capabilities remain limited and our land filling continues to grow with an increasing population and visitor numbers. Our goal now is to take all of the insights we have gleaned through the procurement process and apply those lessons learned to tender a revised project that will be achievable, affordable, and meet the needs of all of our Islands, now and in the years to come.

Once both parties have exited the project agreement, the Government intends to issue a revised national solid waste management strategy and strategic outline case followed by procurement for an updated solid waste management solution for the country. This is necessary to ensure the Government is adhering to the fundamental principles of public procurement such as transparency, fairness, competition, and value for money. The intent is to utilise, as far as possible, previously created documents and resources in order to ensure we are being as economical as possible in terms of the time and cost, to create a new outline business case for an updated version of this project that best meets the needs of our Islands.

While the decision as to which Ministry will take the process forward is at the discretion of Cabinet, the Ministry of Sustainability is well prepared to continue our role as the lead agency for the project procurement going forward. This would ensure continuity of the Government's project team who have the benefit of years' experience of negotiating a project of this magnitude and unique challenges. This will enable the Government to administer the procurement process in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, the ISWMS project was never going to be an all-encompassing solution to our waste management challenges. In addition to Government's responsibility to advance a sustainable, holistic, solid waste management solution, Government has the opportunity to support individuals and organisations who are trying to pursue sustainable business practices and develop new products and programmes that benefit our people, economy and environment.

Mr. Speaker, our natural environment is essential to keeping our communities healthy and safe; the Department of Environment and the Department of Environmental Health play distinct, but complementary roles in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our people by ensuring the protection of our ecosystems, the quality of the air we breathe and the food we eat; the preservation of unique species which are found

nowhere else in the world, and enabling the sustainable treatment of solid waste.

If there is one thing the environmental impact assessment process for the ISWMS project has demonstrated, it is that we have much work to do in terms of developing the legislative framework necessary to effectively support the delivery and ongoing operations of such a project. The work ahead of us includes:

- the development of local air quality standards and related legislation to govern air quality emissions;
- the development of effective governmental permitting arrangements to ensure we are prepared to handle the long-term environmental oversight of such projects; and
- the development of waste management strategies and techniques for the Sister Islands which adequately service the people of those communities and are in line with the waste management standards and practices proposed for Grand Cayman, and that are international best practices.

For each of these important projects, the obvious synergies between the Departments of Environment and Environmental Health are clear.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate three key messages from my remarks today:

- First, Cabinet has taken a decision that the Cayman Islands Government and the Dart-led Consortium will begin taking the necessary steps to exit the project agreement for the ISWMS or ReGen project.
- Second, the Government is prepared to employ all of the lessons learned over the years of this procurement in order to procure a new solid waste management solution as quickly and cost effectively as possible.
- Third, achieving a modern, sustainable and affordable solid waste management solution for the Cayman Islands remains a key priority for our Government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the project team—those representing the Government and those representing the Dart Consortium—for their dedication to this project over the years, for their continued patience and cooperation as we exit the project agreement and for their support going forward. We have much work ahead of us; important, necessary work, to ensure we are able to manage our solid waste effectively and sustainably in the long-term.

Mr. Speaker, sustainability is to focus on the wellbeing of our people by promoting practices that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of future generations. Our

choices as elected officials have a profound impact on the wellbeing of future generations. It is our duty and responsibility to make decisions based on the future generations, because they are the ones who we are here to protect.

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, the Government has taken this position, and I thank you for allowing me to make this statement.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Honourable Members, pursuant to Standing Order 30(2), I will permit short questions from Members to the Minister for the purposes of seeking clarification of anything that was not clear.

Member for Newlands.

Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the practice that they are to be short questions, and the complex information provided here, I will try to be very short notwithstanding.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister indicated in her statement, this project was the largest contemplated in the Cayman Islands. It was a critically important project as well, and there were certainly many issues and complexities, including the land transfer agreement being signed and separated from the project agreement and the complexities around the outstanding conditions precedent; and yes, as has been indicated, there were significant cost elements, but it comes down to a matter of priorities—

The Speaker: Honourable—

Hon. G. Wayne Panton: My question, sir—

The Speaker: Yes, go ahead. *[Laughter]*

Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Will be very short. My question, sir, is simply this: Given the issue, and given what we have learned, what has led the Government to conclude that doing a different procurement for the same or greater outcomes will cost less.

The Speaker: The Minister to answer.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, what I can say to the Member, is that as I set out in my statement, the Cabinet and the Government came to this decision based on all of the different factors; the risk and the financial constraints that the Government was going to find themselves in later down the long-term forecast. As a result of that, it did not appear to be the most prudent and responsible decision to continue with the project at this stage.

To your question, how do we know that something else will not be more expensive? If you put it back out for tender and you're back in the same position, well, then you'll know; but we're talking about a magnitude of... *[Pause]*

I was double checking whether I could or could not share numbers, which I can't, but I know it is a very significant cost. Putting it back out to procurement, given all of the concerns that have been raised, which I've said in my statement, has given the Government the decision to end the project at this stage.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.
Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Government for making such a bold decision. I fully support it [because], while the Minister may not disclose the amount, the last number I saw was over US\$2 billion over 25 years—

The Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have my question.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Now that the Government has made this decision, would it be willing to release the Auditor General's report which basically shared that the project was not value for money? That's my question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister to answer.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to touch on the value for money bit in relation to the said report, however, it is not a publicly available document and, as far as I know, it is not the Cabinet that determines whether that report is released or not. Value for money was also considered when we looked at the project, if I failed to elaborate on that during my presentation.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

Through you, to the Honourable Minister; I am seeking some clarification as well. There's a number of questions here, but the first one that struck me was the emphasis put on the failure to get CUC, which it says rightfully here, was the only customer, to sign a PPA [Power Purchase Agreement]. There was much emphasis put on that, as far as making a decision.

The Speaker: Do you have a question?

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, my question is: If you couldn't get them to

sign a PPA now, how will you get them to sign in the next round?

The Speaker: The Minister to answer.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, for clarity, I don't understand how the Member got from my presentation that I was focusing only on the PPA.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: You said it seemed like I was leaning on that. It was one of the factors that were considered.

Your question is a valid question, because if we're going to be building a waste-to-energy facility to sell energy to our energy provider, what happens if we can't secure a customer? It would mean that a waste-to-energy facility would not be the way to go, unless you have somebody else who would be able to buy the energy. Those are the reasons why I set that out; that's not to mean that we would not have agreed on a power purchase agreement.

I'm not saying that we weren't going to agree, but the fact that we were now being asked to extend the long stop date and the financial close and we hadn't agreed on the power purchase agreement, was one of the factors that were considered.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't being facetious or anything, it is just that on page two of seven, half of it talks about the inability to secure a customer, thus insinuating that it makes a contract not sustainable financially. That's the only reason, so I wasn't trying to be mischievous in that sense—

The Speaker: Honourable Deputy—

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I do have another question.

The Speaker: I was going to say, please quickly turn it into a question.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: You all are trying me.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Speaker to the Honourable Minister.

I am sorry, but I have heard from the time we were there four years ago that the current tipping site had a 2 to 5-year lifespan— I don't buy it. I look at it every day. Twenty-six thousand tons of stink are being

poured into the air there every day, and we want to go taller with it?

Mr. Speaker, my two questions on that, are:

1. is the Government making any other preparations for a secondary site?
2. if there are any, would the Minister be willing to use some of the funds left to ensure that there's proper material to layer the landfill more regularly than it is now; not only to assist in compacting and extending the life of it, but to contain the smell.

The entire West Bay Road— it's not just "Swamp", it's not just George Town Courts, it's not just Marbel Drive, it's not just Kintyre [Drive], it is all the way down to the area at Pizza Hut that you can smell the landfill. It just depends on which way the wind is blowing. If the wind switches around and you go to Kirk Market to shop, you *gotta* run inside. You have to hold your breath and run inside, so I'm asking for consideration in those two things, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, just for clarity, I want you to confirm your question. Your question related to the capacity of the landfill and... the method in which land filling would continue?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The second bit related to whether you had or could obtain sufficient funding to increase the regularity of the covering of the landfill to reduce the smell issue.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I ask you to bear with me for one moment. I want to relay to my team.

The Speaker: That is fine, ma'am.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Madam Minister.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Member, and also the Member for Newlands for their questions.

In relation to the two questions that the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition posed, this is what I talked about earlier, about there being synergies between both of the Ministries.

In relation to the capacity, based on the information that we have received, the project team is confident that we have approximately five to six years with the current area that we are land filling, to take it up to the 70-foot mound, but as the Member just said, when you were here you were told two to three years. I think if you go back and look at the *Hansards*, they were saying for many years ago that there were only five to eight

years, at the landfill; so, whilst we want to address the matter very quickly and put it out for procurement and get the issue resolved, I am confident that we do have the capacity there at the landfill.

In relation to the second question, about the way in which we continue the land filling, again, I can't speak to the way in which the process is handled through DEH; but as everybody can see the way, the practices, in which landfill has gone recently have changed, and I would only imagine it will continue in that fashion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. I'll permit one, maybe two, further questions given the gravity of this matter.

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

Mr. Speaker, I heard statements made regarding the project's affordability.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader, quickly turn it into a question.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, I will, sir. What we have never heard, is what the cost was going to be. The project is dead. We accept that, but we have been trying for well over a year to get a figure from Government.

How could it go from \$670 million to \$2 billion in just a couple of years? It seems impossible. For crying out loud, tell us what the number was. Why was it going to be so expensive? The country deserves to know what the final number was going to be in terms of the cost of the project. That's the question I'd like to ask.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister to answer.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member sounds like he has a good idea of what's going on in terms of the cost, but I'm mindful of answering this question at this stage. I know we intend to put the matter back out for procurement, so I would intend to offer a response. I'm sure members of the public will know more as this continues and information becomes available.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister. Any further questions? *[Pause]*

Madam Clerk, I have approved another statement by the Minister of Health and Wellness relating to the Section 11(5) supplementary funding.

Minister of Health and Wellness

Supplementary Funding Appropriation changes in accordance with Section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision)

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, Minister of Health & Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Prospect: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to bring to the attention of this honourable Parliament details of the appropriation changes approved by Cabinet for the Ministry of Health and Wellness in accordance with Section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) during the 2023 financial year.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry had nine such changes during 2023 as follows:

Local and Overseas Tertiary Care and Medical Care for Indigents - June 2023

July 2023 - Supplementary funding of \$13.4 million to cover additional expenditures in 2023.

- NGS 55 - Tertiary Care for Various Local and Overseas Institutions in the amount of \$9 million; and
- HEA 2 - Medical Care for Indigents in the amount of \$4.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 11(5) of the Public Management Finance Act, (2020 Revision) on July 5th, 2023, Cabinet granted supplementary funding approval for appropriation HEA 2 - Medical Care for Indigents to ensure that adequate funding was made available for this appropriation during the fiscal year 2023, in order to secure the continued coverage of approved persons under this Appropriation.

Mr. Speaker, also on July 5th, 2023, in accordance with section 11(5) of the Public Management Finance Act, 2020, Cabinet granted approval for supplementary funding for appropriation NGS 55 - Tertiary Care for Various Local and Overseas Institutions in the amount of \$9 million, for the fiscal year 2023 to ensure that, again, adequate funding was available for continued coverage of approved persons under this appropriation.

It must be noted that adequate funding for both appropriations was needed to prevent any disruption to the provision of these vital primary and secondary healthcare services to the people of the Cayman Islands and on behalf of the Cayman Islands Government.

In both instances, the Ministry of Health and Wellness had to ensure that financial obligations to local and overseas healthcare providers were met in a timely manner. The aim was to avoid any negative effects that could occur with relationships between providers and patients referred by the Cayman Islands Government, thus resulting in them being denied access to critical care, which would have the potential to affect not just indigent, but the entire Civil Service body and public service.

**Poinciana Rehabilitation Centre,
September 2023**

September 2023 - reallocation of \$1.7 million from HES 1 OpEx (Operation Expense) to appropriation EI 53 for the completion of the Poinciana Rehabilitation Centre.

Mr. Speaker, on September 18th, 2023, in accordance with Section 11(5) of the Public Management Finance Act (2020 Revision), Cabinet granted approval of supplementary funding of \$1.7 million to ensure that adequate capital funding was available for the completion of the Poinciana Rehabilitation Centre in fiscal year 2023. This expenditure was extremely important, as Poinciana will provide the only dedicated long-term residential mental health facility in the Cayman Islands for locals in need of long-term care, in addition to the following key benefits:

- Mental health care will be commensurate with the population's need.
- The healthcare system will endeavour to provide mental health care in the Cayman Islands where clinically and financially feasible, as opposed to overseas.
- Mental health care will align with leading practice and supporting evidence.
- Mental health care will be delivered in a manner that is in keeping with the Caymanian culture.
- Therapeutic residential care will be part of the continuum of mental health care in the Cayman Islands.
- Practical and appropriate existing resources will be utilised to support residential mental health care rather than duplicating services or resources.
- Residential healthcare will be planned for today's needs and will provide flexibility to incorporate a population health approach.
- Mental health care services will be delivered in accordance with the National Health Policy.

**Bulk Waste Clean-up Exercise,
December 2023**

December 2023 - allocation of \$100,000 from Appropriation TP 73 - Other Health and Cultural Related Programmes to HES 7 - Collection, Recycling and Disposal of Waste.

Mr. Speaker, on December 5th, 2023, in accordance with section 11(5) of the Public Management Finance Act (2020 Revision), Cabinet approved supplementary funds for the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) for a bulk waste clean-up exercise. This approval was to facilitate exceptional circumstances. Given the representations made not just to the Department, but to Members of Parliament by concerned constituents who had started to have a stockpile of items, the DEH was asked to conduct a second round of bulk-waste collections to commence on Monday, December 4th, 2023.

The Director indicated that despite short notice, the solid waste collection team would be mobilised as requested, albeit with a contracted two week schedule. This undertaking relied on support from the usual eight officers. A tentative collection schedule was prepared which allowed crews to sweep communities for two days in each district.

Mr. Speaker, the programme spend was approximately \$150,000 which was primarily used to cover overtime payments under output ENV 5, appropriations HES 7. The shorter programme was expected to cost \$100,000. The Ministry of Health and Wellness was able to identify savings within the budget line item TP 73, which was transferred to HES 7- Collection, Recycling and Disposal of Waste.

Further Healthcare-related Appropriations, April 2024

April 2024 - Supplementary funding of CI\$7,938,162 for appropriations to NGS 55 - Tertiary Care at Various Local and Overseas Institutions; HEA 16 - Geriatric Services; HEA 17 - Medical Care Beyond Insurance Coverage/Un-insured; HEA 19 - Medical Care for Chronic Ailments; and HEA 20 - Public Health Programmes, Investigations and Treatments, by reallocating funds, pursuant to section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

Mr. Speaker on April 23rd, 2024, in accordance with Section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision), Cabinet granted approval of supplementary funding of \$7,938,162 to cover additional expenditures incurred in 2023 for a number of appropriations to ensure the continued coverage of the persons covered under them. The appropriations are as follows:

- NGS 55 - Tertiary Care at Various Local [and] Overseas Institutions;
- HEA 16 - Geriatric Services;
- HEA 17 - Medical Care beyond Insurance Coverage/Un-insured;
- HEA 19 - Medical Care for Chronic Ailments; and
- HEA 20 - Public Health Programmes, Investigations and Treatments.

Mr. Speaker, I will now provide more information regarding each appropriation.

Cabinet approved supplementary funding of \$3,041,145 for appropriations NGS 55 - Tertiary Care at Various Local and Overseas Institutions by reallocating funds pursuant to section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision). It was necessary for Cabinet to approve these supplementary funds for NGS 55 to, again, ensure adequate funding was available; and to preserve the relationship and reputation of the Cayman Islands Government among the network of local and overseas healthcare providers, whilst ensuring that the group of persons serviced by

NGS 55 funding had access to the appropriate medical institutions and services as medically required.

Mr. Speaker, these costs are normally initially undertaken by CINICO and then reimbursed by the Ministry through the NGS 55 appropriation. I would like to remind the Parliament that there have been several requests for supplementary funding in previous years for NGS 55. The budget for this programme continues to be inadequate for the growing needs of our people of the Cayman Islands due to the increasing number of indigents, seafarers and veterans and dependents, and the escalating cost of tertiary healthcare. The monthly average of covered indigent numbers has been increasing, with these numbers currently totalling 2,000 persons.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet approved supplementary funding of:

- \$2,501,253 for appropriations to HEA 16 - Geriatric Service;
- \$1,018,311 for appropriations HEA 17 - Medical Care Beyond Insurance Coverage or Un-insured;
- \$435,764 for appropriation HEA 19 - Medical Care for Chronic Ailments; and
- \$941,689 for appropriations HEA 20 - Public Health Programmes, Investigations and Treatments,

by reallocating funds pursuant to section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

Mr. Speaker, under HEA 16, comprehensive healthcare is provided to residents over 59 years of age who are uninsured, underinsured, or who have exhausted their coverage.

Under HEA 17, access to specialists and emergency health care is provided to children, pregnant women and Caymanians who are un- or under- insured. This medical access includes general practice, specialist clinic, emergency medical care, diagnostic and therapeutic services, as well as inpatient care for children aged 18 years or less; antenatal visits, postnatal visits and family planning services for un- or under-insured pregnant women and Caymanians.

HEA 19 provides access to healthcare for Cayman residents with chronic, non-communicable diseases who are either un- or under- insured.

HEA 20 provides administrative services for public health programmes such as communicable disease surveillance and control, HIV/AIDS, immunisation and tobacco control.

Mr. Speaker, it was necessary for Cabinet to approve supplementary funding to ensure that the group of persons serviced by HEA 16, 17, 19 and 20 appropriations had access to the appropriate medical services as medically required. Costs for these services are billed in arrears to the Ministry of Health and Wellness by Health Services Authority through HEA 2.

Mr. Speaker, as previously mentioned, the approval of the supplementary funding is necessary in order to preserve the relationship and reputation of the

Cayman Islands Government among the network of local and overseas healthcare providers, whilst ensuring that the group of persons serviced by these programmes have access to the appropriate medical institutions and services as medically required.

Mr. Speaker, the funds required for supplementary funding was reallocated from unspent balances within the following appropriations:

- HES 1- Policy Advice and Ministerial Services for Health and Wellness, \$3,938,162;
- HES 11 - Mosquito Control Services, \$3.5 million; and
- TP 73 - Other Health and Wellness Programmes, \$500,000,

Total reallocation: \$7,938,162.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to outline these various section 11(5) supplementary funding requests which occurred during the 2023 fiscal year. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.
Madam Clerk.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: None.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

Honourable Members before we move into Private Members' Motions, I propose to take a short suspension so that Members may fortify themselves for what is likely to be a long road ahead. We will suspend until 3:30.

Proceedings suspended at 3:08 pm.

Proceedings resumed at 3:46 pm.

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

OTHER BUSINESS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

**Private Member's Motion No. 11 of 2023-2024—
Motion to Increase Fines and Enforce Road Safety**

The Speaker: I recognise the honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 11, standing in my name, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS Cayman continues to develop and traffic has grown;

AND WHEREAS persons who come to live and work and some of our own local people who continue to display improper road courtesy, which results in bad driving;

AND WHEREAS dangerous driving with speeding is now commonplace on all our roadways;

AND WHEREAS we are experiencing a high loss of life due to dangerous driving;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers immediately taking necessary steps by the following actions:

1. immediately reduce speed limits in all districts and on all roads
2. immediately increase surveillance and increase fines for speeding and dangerous driving;
3. place speed "Calming" mechanisms in all public roads;
4. install digital speed signs capable of recording and issuing tickets; and
5. ensure that tickets issued for infractions are paid.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion has been duly moved. Does the honourable Member for West Bay West wish to speak thereto?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have two Motions before the House, and as far as I'm concerned, they are very easy to understand, because they speak to everyday life and happenings in our Islands, so I don't propose to draw out debate on them. I think this Motion says what it wants, but I would hope that some Members would rise to agree.

Sir, the situation on our roads is atrocious. I witness, day after day, how poor driving, discourteousness, recklessness, and speeding are making our roads a danger. As I drive, I ask myself where in the world are these people going? You're in a line-up of cars, and they are honking their horns and speeding past you, only to get one or two cars ahead. Where are they going?

Mr. Speaker, most highway speed limits are set at 40; some may be 50, but I think most of them are 40. I don't drive 40 anyway. I experienced, in particular, these huge trucks, 12 wheelers moving so fast,

crossing me doing 40— and they have to be doing at least 60 to get so far ahead in seconds. Mr. Speaker, there is no call for this. Even on neighbourhood roads, vehicles are flying, and if a child runs out they won't stand a chance.

That's been my big concern in the neighbourhoods, and I know because of my neighbourhood. When I moved there, it was only five houses down in Town Hall Crescent, maybe six. Now, of course, it has grown in the last 49 years that I've been there. I see these cars just driving out. My grandson will be out in our yard and he likes to run; and I don't ever close my gates, they have not been closed since I've been there and I worry about that, because these people are reckless. Parents are walking, their child slips out of the parent's hand and these cars are coming full speed. They won't stand a chance. If I witness people walking their babies, I stop or slow right down to five miles per hour.

Then there is this gearing up or down—I don't know what they call it—from these heavy industrial vehicles, even in the middle of town. I said, but stop. Which hill in Cayman are they climbing? Mr. Speaker, there is no need for what I see happening on our roads. No need for it to be taking place. The noise level in our environment is absolutely ridiculous when they're gearing up. I don't know which one they're doing, but they're making a whole heap of noise.

Mr. Speaker, just look at the death count on our roads. Isn't that enough to tell our public? Isn't that enough to be a warning that speeding is wrong? Cayman roads, as good roads as they are, they're not made for speed! Of course, some of these people believe that by speeding, they are the best drivers.

You can see them cocked-up halfway; their foot out of the window or one foot up on the dashboard. Well, tell me, in a sensible community, *why*?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Yes! You see a car coming and think, *who's driving this car?* They are flat out, the seat is way back. No.

Our young people are involved, but adults and others who come here to live and work with us are the perpetrators. The death count on the roads is far too high. Three people [dead] in one [accident]? I don't know if I've seen that. I know about two people at a time, but I've never heard about three people in an accident like that.

There has to be some hard decisions taken. The road calming measures we use, some people don't like them. They say, "oh, it's bad for your vehicle". They're bad for your vehicle because you're not paying attention to it and you're flying, and when you hit that, of course it has an impact on your vehicle but that's what road calming measures are for—to slow you down.

These speedsters are not adhering to careful driving, so I say put in the road calming measures. Put

them in the main highway if necessary. I also say reduce speed limits. Cayman is too small for these speed limits. Roads that are 30 in West Bay, I want them back down to 20. In subdivisions, it should be 15. *Why?* This speeding, speeding, speeding. Highways? Put them back down to 30.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Well, the police can't be everywhere, but if the police are not there, they are going to speed anyway, if they think they can get away.

Mr. Speaker, there are all kinds of evidence. We see it day by day, and I am asking for relief for our traveling public, ourselves. Now there has to be hard decisions taken because the people doing these are not considerate. That's why we have to step up now. I would hope that Members will agree with the Motion and Government quickly act on what the Motion is asking. Find the solutions and make our roads safer for one and all.

Cabinet can decide how to address the issues. I know that the Minister for Transport, they have some committees, or Cabinet, whatever they are doing, they can decide on the various things that the Motion is asking about. Maybe some of them are being moved on presently.

Accidents are easy to happen, no matter how careful one can be much less, Mr. Speaker, people who are driving big trucks doing over 60 miles per hour, loaded! Those in small vehicles don't stand a good chance if a big truck like that come flying down on you.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I don't intend to be long on either one of my motions because they are very plain, and I think Members will understand what the Motion asks for.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Minister for Infrastructure?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Motion to increase the fines and enforce road safety, as moved by the Elected Member for West Bay West. Significant efforts have already been made to improve monitoring and enforce road safety through the National Road Safety Committee, chaired by the Chief Officer, Mr. Eric Bush.

The mentioned committee continues to make progress in implementing the National Road Safety Strategy's nineteen targets, reflecting our commitment to making our roads the safest in this region. I wish to share some of the key achievements with the honourable House.

First, last year, we established a unified system to track all road safety data, previously scattered across entities like 9-1-1 and the police service. This centralised database, incorporating data since 2016,

allows for coherent analysis for data-driven decision making.

Secondly, we launched the What If campaign in November 2023, beginning with the No More For 2024 initiative. This ongoing public engagement campaign promotes safe driving through media channels, social events, festivals and road signage; for enforcement, we have increased the operations during peak times, deploying more traffic patrols, mobile speed readers and CCTV. RCIPS is collaborating with the NRA [National Roads Authority] and the educating sub-committee is emphasising school education programmes. The task force is also reviewing penalties and considering creating a point system.

In addition, the NRA continues to improve the road safety and signage. Another internationally recognised road safety assessment will be conducted this year to assist the NRAs work. The engineering and standards subcommittee, which reports to the road safety committee, is also making progress with introducing vehicle safety standards specific to the Cayman Islands.

In June, my team and I visited the Department of Public Safety Communications to review the surveillance system and how it aligns with the National Road Safety Strategy. I'm pleased to report to this honourable House that we were very pleased with the level of surveillance seen.

Mr. Speaker and Members, let us remember that improving road safety cannot be done by enforcement and engineering alone. It requires the community's buy-in and the change of people's behaviour on the roads, which takes time and focused efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I understand what the Member from West Bay West is talking about and going through. My constituency of North Side has actually been going through a road safety strategy. A few months ago, we actually marked out the roads going through Old Man Bay where we will be implementing speed tables to see how effective that is; because we understand that a police officer can't be at every corner 24/7 to watch them. We're also looking at putting in more speed cameras in the constituency of North Side. For now, the only thing I see that can slow speeders down is the speed tables. That's the only thing that will be there 24/7, especially in the small communities.

Mr. Speaker, we have to start somewhere. Some people may not like them, some people may not agree with them; but you know what? A life saved is better than them agreeing with me.

Mr. Speaker, part of this job is to make sure that we keep our people safe and making decisions. It may not always be the most popular decision, but we have to make a decision. I've taken it up that I want to reduce the speeding in my constituency. That's why we marked these speed tables out to let people know that they were coming.

I also went around to the people in the constituency with a petition asking them if they would sign. At

first, some were reluctant and said, no. They were worried about how that would affect the fire service or how it would affect the ambulances. All good questions. What I must say is that, during a test in some of the areas that we have already done in West Bay, the ambulance operators and fire service are okay with the design of those speed tables that we created. They were okay.

We put a few of them at Rum Point. I personally asked the ambulance drivers, how did it affect them going in and out of Rum Point? They said, the first ones we had, which were speed-humps, were a bit difficult for them; but the new speed tables that we created made life much easier for them; it didn't take anything off of the time of them getting to where they had to go.

After talking with them, I decided that we're going to spray a few of these throughout Old Man Bay and right through North Side and get talks going but even people who didn't want it at first are coming to me right now and saying, "*Minister, I see you marked out these things; when are you gonna get these in, man? Last night somebody crossed my house going almost 90 miles per hour. We need to get them in.*" I said, "*but I thought you were against them?*" He said, "*You bring the paper tomorrow, I'll sign it.*"

They've now seen and understand the education process of it, how it works. Now, we know there are people out there that will play politics with it, but we will deal with that when the time comes because I can tell you, the Jay they had in 2021 was different from the one coming.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise and say that I support the Motion that the honourable Member for West Bay West is bringing forward. I look forward to sitting down with him in the next few weeks to go through the Motion with him to see how we can actually implement some of the areas that he's talking about.

We also need to look a bit further. I know the Member for Savannah, Mr. Panton, mentioned to me that he wants to look at speed calming measures for Hirst Road. I told him I would also mention it, in my speech, that we will be looking at speed calming measures for Hirst Road to see how we can actually slow the traffic there. Mr. Speaker, I know Hirst Road goes through a big community and there are many children in that area, so we need to protect our young ones. Some of them may not even realise that we're protecting them for their own good.

If I had a speed table down in Rum Point a few months back, a friend of mine wouldn't have gotten in an accident when a speeding vehicle came around the corner and ran directly into him. I said to him afterwards, "*You know, if I had that speed table there, it would have forced that car to slow down before it went around the corner.*" Thank God that he didn't lose his

life, he broke his arm; it is mending and he's doing much better, but that could have been one less accident down in Rum Point if we had that calming measure down there.

From the Government aspect of things, I will be supporting this Motion, and I hope the rest of my colleagues and the Members on the other side will be doing the same. Thank you so much, sir.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

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

I will speak briefly on this Motion, titled Increasing Fines and Enforcement of Road Safety. As the Elected Member representing the constituency of Prospect that borders with the constituency of Red Bay, you know, and in our chats, Mr. Speaker, how topical this subject is. It has been ongoing for years. I applaud my colleague and friend for working closely with me in answering and finally addressing the needs and the cries for decades.

Shamrock road has been very topical and a rather sad stretch of road for far too long. Too many lives have been lost because of that very same stretch. I can go way back before we even had the bypass. There was a black spot right there, just before Dr Tomlinson's house; a whole family from West Bay, if I'm not mistaken, lost their lives there, including a baby. I can go back; I think there was a young lady on a bicycle and it was raining. I can go back to the latest incident where we had a collision there that broke into fire and about three persons lost their lives. Just recently, the other day a young lady from Cayman Brac. That closely hits home for our Honourable Premier.

The cries, and I have to publicly call out the name of Miss Nancy Rohleder because she lives on that incline right there by Poindexter. Her backyard is pretty much Shamrock Road, and she literally describes what she hears every night. The Millers right there in Cascade— Miss Cheryl. I have been in her home and you can hear them, it's like a launching pad, the speeding along that strip of road. That's just an idea, some of the examples.

We don't even need the statistics. It's proven, just google "Shamrock Road". What is the first thing that pops up? A life lost, another accident. The time has come that we have to deal with this, not only in constituencies but on a national level— and I agree with my colleague; if it takes us having to put speed tables on some of what I consider I-95, and it saves a life, we will have to do what we have to do, but some behaviours that have been imported into our country can no longer be tolerated.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: You come here for a change of life. You come here for what we offer as a jurisdiction. Drop your attitudes and behaviours before they take your boarding pass. I have seen such behaviour in neighbouring jurisdictions where traffic laws do not exist. We see those same behaviours not only creeping in now— they are here, and it needs to stop.

I agree, there were some measures that we temporarily put in place at Ocean Club and Mariners Cove site. That property is now owned by Government. We cleared the way, again, thanks to the assistance of the NRA crews, so that the police would have a soft shoulder to pull off on and stop there and set up surveillance. There's been a speedometer there that shows persons' speed, and I swear, with the two lanes coming into Town from East, people really want to see, "Oh, how much can I clock on that monitor?". It's not to adhere to the speed limit, they're actually trying to see just how fast they're going.

The future looks grim. If we don't change our behaviours. The future looks very, very grim if we continue to tolerate some of the imported behaviours. We have to look at this from a collective perspective; and the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, specifically the traffic department, needs to show where they too are assisting a bit more.

I do understand the challenges and the complexities. We have to be responsible. We can nit-pick at the minibus drivers and we don't want to go into nationalities, but this is not the Cayman we are accustomed to. Courtesy is no more. We spoke about the Jake brakes, the noise ordinance, the speeding— it doesn't matter what infrastructure you have. You have the speeding cameras, you have the soft shoulders, and you now have bicycle lanes. It is very obvious what speed limits are in certain areas, but the behaviours of those who traverse our roads must change and that requires everybody's cooperation and assistance.

Mr. Speaker, you and I, as elected representatives for a very unique area, Red Bay and Prospect respectively, have proven that speed tables work. We no longer hear the cries of Mr. Benny Moore and everybody on Marina Drive. As a matter of fact, I've even gotten a request for Summit Crescent.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Now we're hearing it on Devon Road, so we know that they work; but when you look at the residential areas and some of the people who are really speeding, where they know children play, it's those who live in those areas, because they know the roads that well.

This is not just a task for your Government and your elected officials, this is the responsibility and changing of behaviours and cultures of everyone who lives here, who is from here and who we've allowed to be amongst us. I am publicly appealing to those who

traverse our roads to comply with the traffic laws of this jurisdiction and keep your behaviours and practices where you're coming from.

Thank you for this opportunity.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to make a very short contribution to the debate on this Motion brought by the Member for West Bay West.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion is very timely. It was only this morning I asked the Minister a question about Shamrock Road and the speeding and the need for traffic calming devices of any type to reduce the death and carnage on that road. The area I'm speaking of is less than two miles in length, but I would argue it is the most dangerous piece of road in the country today. Five deaths this year.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Six? On that road?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: That's probably 100 per cent of the deaths on that road this year, all in that two-mile stretch. I would have thought that with such drastic numbers and the levels of the accidents that we would have seen more action and more visible signs of things happening regarding that stretch of road.

Mr. Speaker, I travelled it; I don't often drive out that area, I normally use the bypass road when I go, but it was a Sunday afternoon, I was up at Rum Point and my wife and I were driving home. We drove through the area, coming down on Shamrock, and we were traveling at the speed limit of 40, but just about every car was passing me by; they were driving 50, 55, 60 miles per hour—on a Sunday afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: Mm-hmm

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I can't help but believe that's a good indication of what happens there every day; but it gets even worse on a Friday night, Saturday night and Sunday night, because that's when the real speeding takes place. That's when those accidents that killed and maimed people happened; at that time of the day or night, within that less-than-two-miles stretch of road.

Mr. Speaker, there are things that can be done at that time. If it takes the police to have a permanent presence there on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday night for a few hours to try and calm things down there, then I think it would go a long way. The people who live in

the communities around there, *will* appreciate it. They are concerned for their own safety and that of their children and their families.

I wholeheartedly support the Motion that the Member has brought and I do hope that the Government will take it really seriously and let's try to get something done quite quickly. It would grieve me to no end to know that we accept this Motion here and a few weeks from now, we find that there are still more deaths on that section of road in particular, because we really haven't achieved anything at that point. Let's take it seriously, Minister, and let us let us do what we can. What is happening in our roads is not Cayman. That's not us. We really need to bring this under control.

The other thing I would just mention, in closing, is that I believe the Honda Fit was a car that featured in many of those accidents.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Preach it. Not fit-for-purpose at all.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I leave it right there, because we know what the issues are and we know we need to deal with it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I support the Motion.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism & Ports, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quick, just to say that I'm obviously in full support as a Government to the honourable Parliamentary Secretary and thank him so much for presenting this necessary Motion in light of the traffic concerns in the Cayman Islands; but also to thank the seconder of the Motion, the Member for Bodden Town West, for supporting his efforts in bringing these issues to light once again.

I'm not going to reiterate the seriousness of the resolved section of this, but to stand on behalf of George Town Central to highlight some other areas that is affecting my constituency that I think can also be added to the components of and the spirit of this Motion, which is the concerns in respect to the dump trucks driving through neighbourhood roads.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: I think it's something we have to get a handle on. Major heavy equipment should have no reason to be going

through neighbourhoods unless it's servicing the neighbourhood's roads. Unfortunately, though lots of people in the heavy equipment industry are good friends of mine, I love them dearly, there is this action with the heavy equipment that annoys so many of our law-abiding citizens and seniors particularly, and it's the Jake brakes. I'll do it for the comfort of the listening audience. It goes—

[Imitates sound of a Jake brake]

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Right? There is no need for that.

Now, I am by no means a mechanic in any capacity nor understand the engineering behind the braking system, but I am certain it's not suited or necessary for the flat jurisdiction upon which we live. As far as my little research tells me, it is used for mountainous and hilled landscapes. I would encourage doing the further research and commitments so that we figure out and do the necessary [changes], without interfering with the ability of those who service the aggregate across our communities; by no means do we want to be a hindrance, but your service and your livelihood cannot be a hindrance to the livelihoods of people across the community.

As a matter of fact, it is not only in neighbourhood-roads but on the highways— Esterly Tibbetts, Linford Pearson and Shamrock Road— which are considered main arterials, the Jake brakes are disturbing almost half a mile away from where the vehicle is. I think it's time for us to consider the importation of vehicles whereby they are willing to get them [modified] to take them off. Obviously, we don't want to place any hindrances in the way of them making a livelihood, but it can't be at the disadvantage of others.

Also, specifically Mr. Speaker, Crewe Road, the former Minister, Honourable Joey Hew, and the now Minister, Honourable Jay Ebanks have worked tremendously on making Linford Pearson accessible from many angles. I must say that I'm really impressed with the hard work of the NRA and the Minister and what they have accomplished thus far, by the Bobby Thompson [Way] new roundabout, going right into Windsor Park now. I know the Members for George Town East, George Town West, and George Town South will be really pleased soon, when he announces the opening, thus alleviating the traffic pressures from that area.

Regardless if you have Jake brakes in it or not, with the great work that the former Minister and new Minister are doing, there's *no reason* for you to be driving [there] unless you're supplying aggregate to Crewe Road, because the road is too narrow. We have many seniors, young people and just average drivers coming out of very narrow roads on Crewe Road. It becomes very risky, and I'm *worried*, Mr. Speaker, that one of— forget about the fact that they are my constituents, a life

can be lost by major equipment and, most times, speeding. Even if you're not speeding, the road is so narrow and with such large vehicles passing through... To be honest with you, I think if they're on such narrow neighbourhood roads, they should be passing through with blinkers on, at a certain speed.

I think this is time for us to also review our safety plans for traffic to consider certain types of vehicles that are licensed to be on the road and what roads they can be allowed on and under what conditions. By all means, I'm not suggesting you can't go everywhere because every car, every vehicle has a purpose, but there are examples across the world where you can't drive through at a certain time or if you want to drive through that area, you have to register in the neighbourhood beforehand and so forth.

There's things that we can do, because I don't think it's fair, not only for Crewe Road, which is in my constituency, but for any neighbourhood across the Cayman Islands, for them to be exposed to the risk of heavy equipment in small roads, as well as to be disturbed by the noise pollution that is created through it. Now, the seniors in my constituency have had enough, and I, on behalf of this Government, will be doing everything I can to speak with the police side of things and work strongly with the Minister, who has already shown me that he's working on drafting research to be able to propose legislative changes.

I want the public to know that we are prepared to make the necessary changes. For those persons out there, until we make such changes, I ask you please, for the safety and the peace of my constituents and all those in the lands, stop driving so recklessly throughout our neighbourhoods. A loss of life or loss of peace is not necessary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Minister for Sports.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, Minister of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister, before you begin, could I ask the Honourable Acting Premier to move a Motion to suspend Standing Order 10(2) in order that the business of the House may continue beyond the moment of interruption.

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move a Motion to suspend Standing Order 10(2), so the business of the House can proceed beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order that the business of the House may continue beyond the moment of

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Sports.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support to the Private Member's Motion brought by the Member for West Bay West. It would have been remiss of me not to support it, based on my own experiences in the East End district.

Mr. Speaker, something that stands out in the police report of traffic and crime for 2023 is the number of traffic accidents that we have in this country. Last year, 4,654 speeding-related offences were recorded. Compared to 2022, when there were 3,063, it is a 52 per cent increase in speeding; they are the ones that the police caught, sir, and I'm convinced it's probably four times that, that break the law.

In 2023, the police also attended 3,196 motor vehicle accidents, a 10 per cent increase when compared to 2022; 24 suffered serious injuries— but the Motion also speaks to the high loss of life. There were nine fatalities in 2023, sir, and at the end of the day, excessive speed and careless driving were the main contributors to those persons unfortunately losing their lives.

Mr. Speaker, you'll be familiar where I'm going to talk about— Blake's. I live about a mile from there. I sit on my porch about 50-60 feet from the road, particularly on a Sunday evening. I can hear them coming, and you can't even blink, because if you blink you're *gonna* miss it. Even if you don't blink, you miss them when they pass. I'm expecting that they are going to end up in the post office, they're going that fast. I swear that if they didn't have light posts and guide wires across the road, they would be taking off by the time they reach me.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, will be meeting with the members of my constituency to discuss these traffic calming measures and the locations where we can put them, because something has to be done. Just in my neighbourhood, there are young kids who live across the road. The church is right next door. Kids are up and down there on a Sunday, and I'm fearing that we will have something happen, that you don't even want to talk about. I'm also of the mind, that if it's done foolishly, the person that causes it is going to have to deal with me personally.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: No, sir. We, as a Parliament, have an obligation, and as my colleague from North Side spoke about, doing what is right may not be

popular but it's the right thing to do, because every life we save in this country is a life that a mother, father, sister, brother, doesn't have to attend a church service for.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to make it publicly known that I support this Motion wholeheartedly, and I hope that the rest of my colleagues will support it as well, so that we can get a reduced amount of traffic accidents and fatalities on the road and ensure that we build a safer Cayman.

Thank you, sir.

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

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for Savannah: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, finally, somebody's beginning to speak out. I rise to offer my support to this Motion and it should come as no surprise to my colleagues who are aware of the many times I have registered my concerns related to this topic.

Mr. Speaker, we have major issues all over these Islands with reckless driving, but I'm speaking directly to the communities of Savannah-Newlands. As we all know, it's one of the fastest growing communities and we witness hell on wheels every day. Those truckers don't seem to want to slow down even when the Savannah Primary School has flashing lights indicating that they're supposed to be driving slower. It does not deter them. It's becoming a grave concern. Hirst Road and Shamrock Road are like race tracks; we need to reduce the speed limits for the safety and wellbeing of not just our citizens, but visitors to our beautiful shores.

Mr. Speaker, while we may have made efforts to address this issue, the statistics speak for themselves with the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service reporting over fifty vehicle accidents per week. It is evident that existing speed-calming mechanisms and current regulations are insufficient. The frequency and severity of road accidents are not just numbers, they represent real lives affecting real families, and devastating real communities. This is not a matter we can afford to ignore any longer. The current situation is dire and demands immediate and decisive action. There is an urgent need to enforce stricter road safety measures and increase penalties for speeding and dangerous driving.

Mr. Speaker, the problem extends beyond the tragic loss of life. Even our workers from the National Roads Authority who are diligently constructing and maintaining our highways are not spared from the dangers posed by reckless driving. This is a stark reminder that the issue of road safety affects everyone, including those who work tirelessly to improve our infrastructure. We owe it to them and to all our citizens to create a safer environment on our roads.

The Motion to increase fines for speeding and dangerous driving is not merely punitive, it is a crucial step towards changing behaviour and instilling a culture

of responsible driving. This is why I am supporting the implementation of increased penalties to serve as a deterrent that will hopefully send a very loud and clear message that reckless behaviour on our roads will not be tolerated. Furthermore, we must also consider additional measures such as enhanced enforcement, even more public education campaigns and continued investment in our road safety infrastructure. Such combined efforts will hopefully not only help to reduce the number of accidents, but also foster a sense of accountability amongst drivers.

Mr. Speaker, road safety is not a partisan issue, but a matter of public safety and common sense. We all have a role to play in protecting the lives of our residents and visitors. I urge all Members of this House to support this Motion, recognising that the safety and security of our roads are a priority that transcends political lines. It is my hope, that by supporting this Motion Members will be affirming our commitment to safer roads and more responsible driving within our communities.

I would like to thank the Minister of Planning for his acknowledgement of the Motion and his comments; he knows that I'm constantly on him about this, and if there's anything I can do to assist him and his team, I'm more than willing to lend my support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister for Labour and Border Control.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to first thank the movers of this Motion, the honourable Members for West Bay West and Bodden Town West. How timely is this Motion?

I rise to give a short contribution and my support. I want to thank you all again publicly for bringing this Motion and enforcing road safety. Bodden Town proper is probably one of the oldest areas and there is much foot traffic; children and the elderly cross the road regularly and vehicles are speeding beyond control. It's very dangerous. As I stand by the roadside and see the cars passing— even sitting in a car on the road side, you feel the car move like it wants to lift up.

I saw what was happening from a couple of years now, where people were just fascinated with speeding. I saw what was happening when I went to church on Sunday mornings. I saw the difficulty seniors had, crossing the road to the church hall and back to the church, so I made a plea to the NRA— who at first refused to put in a crosswalk because they said it was a highway. Now we have one; thanks, NRA, for deciding that it was a good safety idea, otherwise someone was going to get killed. Someone was going to get hurt badly, Mr. Speaker.

We have speed signs placed throughout the Bodden Town proper area [but] it seems these speed signs, as has been said already, is encouraging people to see how fast they're going. The speeding that takes place on Anton Bodden Road... It is a racetrack; the police are out there at times and they catch many people. They're not out there all the time, but the speeding is unbearable on Anton Bodden and some of the interior roads there, Belford and Lookout and some of the other areas.

I definitely agree with placing additional calming measures throughout this island and digital speed signs; should have been done a long time ago. They've been doing it in the US for years now. You speed and you get your ticket in the mailbox or by email and you go pay a fine or you lose your licence.

In terms of accidents, Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the question, my plea for one more hour sleep is not affecting many of these accidents that are happening on the road today, especially in the Bodden Town area. Obviously, we need the East-West Arterial, that's without a doubt. Some may argue, but it has been found—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: It has been found that tiredness causes accidents.

Mr. Speaker, if Bodden Town is the fastest growing district, as has been said, where do you think most of the 500 cars that come into this island every month would be going?

You can see the stress that we have and my plea has always been, to please have some mercy on the parents and children of Bodden Towners, East Enders, North Siders and all connected. They leave home in the dark, they come back home with, or to their children, in the dark. That is not a good-quality life. I think everybody knows where I stand in terms of the East-West arterial. I wish I knew how to drive a bulldozer.

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I know the Member for Savannah would be a good teacher.

Mr. Speaker, we can't keep importing cars without expanding our road network. We can't keep importing people if we don't upgrade our public transport system.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, I want to state publicly my support for this Motion and reducing speed limits in all districts and on all roads; immediately increasing surveillance and increasing fines for speeding and dangerous driving; placing speed calming mechanisms in all public roads; installing digital speed signs capable of recording and issuing tickets; and ensuring that tickets issued for infractions are paid. This Motion has my full support. It is long overdue.

I thank you, God bless.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] The Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking the honourable Member for West Bay West for bringing this Motion. I also want to join my colleague from the neighbouring district, the Honourable Minister for Bodden Town East, who brought up the East-West Arterial. As I look back at the Motion—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: We're getting there.

As I look back on the Motion and reflected on what the Member for Bodden Town East just said, I want to put something in context that came out of the last census. The reason I want to raise this, Mr. Speaker, is that after you pass Savannah Meadows, there is one lane going up and one lane going down and this year makes 20 years since the passing of Hurricane Ivan. We all remember Mariners Cove.

When I look at the census— and I always walk with my copy— in 1970, the total population for the districts of Bodden Town, East End and North Side was 2,227 people. In 1970 they had one lane going up and one lane going down. Nine years later, in 1979, the population of Bodden Town, East End and North Side increased by 1,209 persons, or 54 per cent, to 3,436; and we still had one lane going up, one lane coming down. Nineteen (19) years later from 1970, the population went up by 3,101 persons, or 139 per cent, to 5,328. Nineteen years later, one line up, one lane down.

Twenty-nine years later, in 1999, the population went to 5,987, or 269 per cent, for a total of 8,214 persons living in Bodden Town, East End and North Side. One lane up, one lane down. Forty years later, in 2010, population has now increased by 11,202 people, or 503 per cent, to 13,429 people. One lane up, one lane down. In 2021, 51 years later when we did the census, population by then increased by 16,266, or 735 per cent, to a total of 18,593. Fifty-one years later, one lane up, one lane down.

Mr. Speaker, it's easy for us to get up and understand what is happening. I think, based on the response today, everybody in this House is on the same page— but it can't be a situation where the vast majority of the people who have allowed the districts of Bodden Town, East End and North Side, to have one lane up and one lane down 51 years later, after all of this development, do not even live in Bodden Town, East End or North Side. We know where they live.

Mr. Speaker, the quality of life, which is what we are all about, is being seriously affected, and when we look at the studies of road rage, et cetera... I can tell you right now, that coming down in the morning, Northward has become a speedway with people cutting through Northward to come out through Will T. Drive to save what? Two minutes? I have people in the Will T. area who can't even leave their homes. Can't get out, can't reverse— nothing.

We had one Commissioner who was smart enough to think that we didn't need a traffic department anymore and closed it down. Here we are now.

The Member for Prospect, the Honourable Minister, talked about the culture being imported, whereby some of the bus [drivers] just pull off wherever they want, they do this wherever they want. We understand that they need to make their money, but it can't come at the expense of people and their quality of life. We have people who came to this country as passengers and have gone back home as cargo because of the same thing. You know what I mean?

Mr. Speaker, I live in a district where, when I pull out on the road, I am pulling out into a 40 miles per hour zone, and there are days, when I see those trucks coming, that even though I am inside the side road, I still reverse. I reverse, because anything can happen and the most they can do, is say sorry.

It has to be a situation where people need to stop and take a look at themselves. It's not even a matter of speed bumps, because Anton Bodden Drive in the district of Bodden Town East has speed bumps along the way and people are still speeding! I swear to God, some of them try to go over them as fast to see how high they can go.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: It is a cultural issue. Until people start burying people close to them and understand... I can tell you, I've lost family members to auto accidents; I know what it feels like. I know what it's like to lose a family member and have a closed casket. It is not a pretty thing, when you can actually see what it is about.

My colleague from West Bay [West], many people say you're old, but it's clear your ideas *nuh* cold. You still have a little bit of fight in you. They say as long as a lion has teeth, he shall hunt. As long as you're here, you might as well continue to show that you got some fight in you.

This is something that we need to do and we need to take seriously. I'm going to ask right now, in Savannah it's a 30 miles per hour zone once you pass dominos coming up. I would love to see that 30 mile per hour zone extended all the way up into the 25 mile per hour zone that we have by the school.

I understand that the truck guys need to make a living, but the speed that some of them come with... Sometimes the trucks aren't even covered and things

are falling off. Sometimes I see little pebbles falling off—

An Hon. Member: Twenty seconds.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: —looking to break somebody's windshield, just to save what?

Much of this still comes back to the point that now we have so many homes in these residential areas, yet we just have that one lane up and one lane down to do all of this. We can't continue like this.

For those of us in the eastern districts, they do understand. I really feel bad for the people in our districts of Bodden Town, East End and North Side, because as the Minister for Bodden Town East said, people are leaving home in the dark and coming back home in the dark and then we're wondering why so many people in our country have a vitamin D deficiency. We're living in the sunny Caribbean, and some people don't even see sunlight.

There's much that we need to do. It's cultural, and this Parliament can never legislate morality nor principle, but we can ask people to be responsible—and I will say this to people: The day the wrong person gets killed on the road by somebody else, and then somebody goes and takes matters into their own hand... because I will tell you right now, I have children and a mama who are still driving. The day somebody does something crazy, Chris *gonna* be just as crazy—*unna* can take that anyway *unna* want; but we need to do something about it, because I *goin'* tell you right now, I will not be one of those persons who sits down and leaves things as is. That's just not in my constitution.

We need to take some measures, but at the end of the day, as the Minister for Bodden Town East said, we need the East-West Arterial, because here we are, 51 years later, one lane up, one lane down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The Member for West Bay North.

Mr. Bernie A. Bush, Elected Member for West Bay North: Mr. Speaker, I, too, rise to say that I support this Motion.

I want to thank the Minister for Infrastructure for finally giving me the “sleeping policeman”, or speed bump, over by the Boatswain Bay Presbyterian Church after a long time asking for it, even though we got it on the day the Bible School closed. I still need one by West Bay Primary School, just like we have on West Bay Road by Wesleyan and Grace. I'm asking once again, publicly, for one more, by West Bay Primary School.

If you want to see speed, sit by the West Bay Library and watch as they come from Hell gas station going to the police station through the roundabout. You'll see speed.

Thanks for bringing this, Member for West Bay West; I will be supporting it.

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

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Although it's apparent that the Government supports the Motion, I rise to formally thank the Mover and the seconder for bringing it. I'd also like to thank the Minister for Planning for his response. I won't go over covered ground because I believe we have expressed what we've all been feeling— that at times there seems to be a free-for-all on our roads.

A couple of phrases from Members caught my ear, and I want to introduce a further point that, I don't think, has been mentioned yet. I believe the Leader of the Opposition talked about how when some of the vehicles go by, you feel as if they are to kill and maim. I believe the Member for Bodden Town West talked about people who had to be buried, and the Member for Savannah talked about having measures to send a message.

In the district of West Bay, we have the family of a young man on a motorbike who was killed by a drunk driver. The family has put forward to my constituency office research they've done— I think the Minister for Planning and the Member for West Bay Central have also given them an audience. It shows how other jurisdictions around the world are starting to adopt legislation whereby when a drunk driver causes a fatality and there are surviving children, the court can make a maintenance order against the driver to pay civil restitution for the maintenance of the children because there's a gap in the social safety net. The surviving family may not be quite qualified for welfare, but someone still has to pick up the tab for the children when they have lost a breadwinner because of a reckless drunk driver. I believe in some states it's referred to as Bentley's law or Hailey's law.

I believe it is legislation that we, as a country, should consider— going back to the words of my friend and Member for Savannah— to send a message, in all different aspects that we can, that this type of speeding, reckless driving, whether it's drunk driving, is no longer acceptable in this country. I believe this afternoon, this House is taking a stand. I applaud all Members for it, and I wait for the Mover's right of reply to emphasise the point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

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

[Pause] If not, I'll invite the Mover to exercise his right of reply.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I thought and hoped that Members would rise to add to it, and that they have done. I want to thank the Member for Bodden Town West for his input, for being the second and for his encouragement, always, for me. I don't know if I can say I'm a lion right now but—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I want to thank the Ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and other Members, our Ministers on this side for their support and their very, very valid points.

There was one point I wanted to raise and didn't. Persons who give permission to moving big items on lowboys or otherwise—the Honourable Minister for Tourism spoke about heavy equipment—need to be more considerate of the time these things will be on the highway.

On Saturday, I was coming back to West Bay, and the police were by the main cemetery blocking from there, down to past Foster's supermarket. Police all along the way were helping; and in the midst of all that traffic coming in and going out of West Bay, was this lowboy with a house on it— at two-thirty in the afternoon on a Saturday. It should have been in the morning. Whoever gives that permission, no matter what excuse the movers have, that time should not be agreed. Not that time of day. These things can be moved at night when traffic is less, with all the lighting facilities they have these days. To come that time of the day...

We turned and went around, because it was just too much traffic, and I said, *Thank God for the bypass*. Now you see why we had the sense to put in the bypass. Those are some of the things. I don't need to repeat anything here because all Members rising have given good reason why this Motion should be taken seriously and things should get done.

I am the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Planning and Transport and Infrastructure, so I'll keep talking with the Minister, especially about that safety committee he has. Maybe he'll put me on it— or maybe I'm already on it and didn't know.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Members again. Let's get the things done. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The question is BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government considers immediately taking necessary steps by the following actions:

1. Immediately reduce speed limits in all districts and on all roads

2. Immediately increase surveillance and increase fines for speeding and dangerous driving;
3. Place speed "Calming" mechanisms in all public roads;
4. Install digital speed signs capable of recording and issuing tickets; and
5. Ensure that tickets issued for infractions are paid.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 11 of 2023-2024 passed.

**Private Member's Motion No. 12 of 2023-2024—
Motion to increase ownership of businesses
by Caymanians**

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

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 12, standing in my name which reads as follows:

WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 affirms the Cayman Islands as a country that manages growth and maintains prosperity, while protecting its social and natural environment;

AND WHEREAS Section 16(4) of the Cayman Islands Constitution Order 2009 recognises that preference may be given to Caymanians with regards to ownership of businesses;

AND WHEREAS the Trade and Business Licensing Act recognises that Caymanians should own and control no less than 60% of a local business;

AND WHEREAS the number of Local Control Licenses issued is more than 200;

AND WHEREAS our Islands continue to develop at a fast rate;

AND WHEREAS business opportunities continue to grow as the population has increased;

AND WHEREAS Caymanians are feeling left out due to the many foreign nationals being involved in certain businesses;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Government considers taking immediate steps to amend the Trade and Business Act to increase the percentage ownership by Caymanians from 60% to 100% for the following business activities:

1. Real Estate sales and property management companies
2. Construction businesses up to KYD \$1.5 million

3. Car rentals
4. Watersports operations
5. Light technology up to KYD \$2.5 million.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government places a moratorium on the issuance of Local Companies Control Licenses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers immediately taking the necessary steps to ensure that properties in Cayman are purchased and set aside for Caymanians only, by the following means:

1. That foreign developers building apartments, hotels and such developments pay to the Government a 5% fee off the top of the value of said developments;
2. That such funds be set aside by the Government to purchase properties that are earmarked to be purchased by Caymanians only;
3. That when such properties are purchased by Caymanians it cannot be used for "land banking" and can only be sold to another Caymanian; and
4. That the maximum amount of lots that can be bought by any Caymanian through the above means, be two lots.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers taking the necessary steps to ensure that the Cayman Islands Development Bank (CIDB) is given the necessary resources to assist qualified Caymanian business and qualified Caymanian entrepreneurs with the necessary funding to engage in business activities that are owned 100% by Caymanians.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

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

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking a lot in this Motion and I said that it should be easy to understand because everything speaks to everyday life and happenings in our Islands. While I'm asking much, it all needs to be done. Some have already said it is a bit late but it is still very much needed.

Sir, our Islands is a developing state. Some people [are] tired of it and ask, "*Who are we developing for?*" I've always answered that question with this, "*We are developing for our people.*" Some people fail to see

[that], but for it to stop is a sure way to get less for our people—a people that are asking for more.

All Ministers and Members across this House, are everyday barraged with something that somebody wants us to do. Every day—and not one person, many want us to do something: more and better healthcare, more roads and enhancement of our present roads, all want better education and more schools, docks, enhancements to our airports. Yet, guess what? There is nothing being asked of the Government or pointed out to the Government to do, that doesn't require money.

The hardest environmentalist would understand that, and I say too, "*Who are we developing for?*" For our people. For our people to enjoy some kind of wealth, some better standard of living, and as I have said many times before, my dear friends, embrace wealth or reap poverty. "Embrace wealth or reap poverty". Now, I say, too, Government has tried in many instances, but has to do more than to just allow the development.

We want something for our children and grandchildren, for our posterity. Government has a responsibility to ensure that our people are given opportunities, that those children and grandchildren are given opportunities. That is why parents are working and pouring out themselves—to ensure our children are better educated, to send them to get a better and enhanced knowledge and understanding of what life should be and what life could be in Cayman and when they complete their education, they want and need opportunities, whether it is a job or business ownership. That is what the cry is all about from young Caymanians. What and where can I start a business? What can I own out of this good economy? What can I own more than just getting a car and, maybe, getting a house, that's more difficult today. What am I getting out of it? That's the question we have.

Our grandchildren are old enough, those of us that have them at this point are, to see it. Our children are old enough. In my case, I'm a grandparent now. Five grandchildren. They are saying, "*Well... What are we gonna get out of this, besides a job?*" and there are times that we know situations exist, that some people are left behind, jobs are not there. They're not getting them for whatever reasons, but it is happening.

We have the responsibility to do something about it. We have to take care of them. We brought them into this world. We educate them. We try hard, work hard. Some parents [work] two jobs to be able to send their child to college, even though they might end up with some kind of scholarship from Government or from the private sector. Thank God more is being done today than it was 40 years ago, you can believe that.

When I entered Government, Cable & Wireless used to do a little training, and bankers had one—scholarship. *One*. Today, or yesterday, whenever, somebody gave the figure of how many scholarships Government is giving today, and back then Government didn't give any. You know who got. You know there

was a specialised few that got. You know. The truth is the truth.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yeah. Who is family to who.

While we work hard to get them educated, our children are looking for better opportunities. That's what this Motion is trying to do. We have a responsibility to enable, direct and ensure that he or she who are capable, who have the ambition, that those persons, those young people, our children, great grandchildren, our posterity, can get something from a developing Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, I can repeat, for the record's sake, some of the things that will enhance opportunities for Caymanians who are complaining about not getting something out of Cayman's development. The third resolve, I think, will enhance the ability and opportunity for Caymanians, especially young Caymanians, to own a piece of land.

Let's look at what I'm saying. The first "Resolve" is saying, put aside the businesses that Caymanians can get involved with. Easy enough. Real estate; property management; construction businesses up to \$1.5 million—I'm saying up to \$1.5 million because these are small contractors, so the big contractors shouldn't be allowed to do anything below \$1.5 million, that is left for Caymanians alone. That's easy enough to recognise because everything has to get planning permission, so that is possible.

Car rentals, possible; waters ports operations—that is being worked on right now. I know it is one of the things being worked on by the Minister responsible. We put it there so that it is there Light technology up to \$2.5 million—today is a world of technology, all sorts of small things can be done; so anything over on \$2.5 million must be left for Caymanians. Any kind, no matter what it is.

I would expect that the Minister of Commerce will, give some enlightenment on the next "Resolve". I was talking about placing a moratorium on the issuance of local company licences because we are getting complaints about it. Don't think that there's not much said when people found out how little is being paid by the oil companies; I have no axe to grind for anyone except trying to get a better price for Caymanians, for people living here—and I want to point out, that when I say Caymanians, these are people who are here legally as well, because I know that's a hard thing with some people, (only born Caymanians).

You've got people here legally because they married somebody or otherwise. They are here legally—and I know there's an issue about that, but we can't stop love. We cannot stop love. We can stop the abuse of marriage, the marriages of convenience. We can do that, but we can't stop real love. Caymanians will fall in love with somebody from outside Cayman. My son, being one, so we can't stop that, and they are

here legally. When the Motion talks about Caymanians, it mean those that have Caymanian Status and are Caymanian by law. Yes, we look after our own, all of them.

The third "Resolve", Mr. Speaker, the foreign investment. I have never believed in taxation, as taxation goes. In the UK, I got in a big fight about that and they will never forgive me for telling them, "*Not on my watch.*" No income tax, no property tax, no value added tax. None.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: That's the same one about "I left my pen home"; but I think now, we must find a way that when the developments come—and look, Caymanians are building apartments, too, but we're not talking about Caymanians. We are talking about foreign investment that comes in. Many apartments are being built by those persons. Hotels, too. All of that, whatever kind of business it is that they are legally able to build, we get 5 per cent of the value off the top.

That is paid into Government, and goes into a separate fund which would be set aside by Government, to purchase properties around Cayman that are earmarked to be purchased by Caymanians only. When such properties are purchased by Caymanians, they cannot be used for land banking; meaning that rich John Brown cannot buy five and six lots and hold them for himself. That's what I mean by that. When Government gets that land, it can only be sold to another Caymanian, and the maximum number of lots that a family could buy, by any Caymanian through those means, is two. Remember how that will continue over the years, because the two children will get children and they could sell it, God willing, or buy it and sell it to another Caymanian. It can only be sold.

I think that this is a bold step. Somebody said to me, "*Well, Mack you're a little bit late.*" No, we are not late. I have great hope in Cayman. I don't think we are about to die, as some people want to say. I think we are on the threshold of good things. Investment from around the world still wants to come here and they come here because it's easy for them. We have done well in protecting Cayman. As much as some want to say how bad some Governments have been—or maybe all Governments. We're *gonna* get them soon, telling you all the Governments were bad, except them when you elect them now.

No, Mr. Speaker, I believe. I have great hope in Members of this House. because I believe that all of us want good things for the country. Some have different ways of getting it. They might even beat me up for trying to get something for the country. That has been done before, as you know, Mr. Speaker. We have work to do in this regard.

I asked the Member for Bodden Town West because he is a wide thinker, and in the next "Resolve" he said, "*Mack, we can't do all of this unless we get some*

money outside to help small Caymanian businesses.” Yes, we can't probably pour millions of dollars into the Development Bank, but we can find ways and means of doing it. That bank can't have the same rules as a regular commercial bank because that's one of the things that are killing small businesses today, the rates that you pay those banks.

I have a small farm and I had to borrow money for that. I don't think I can ever get it paid off. Small businesses need that kind of help. I know that the second order is going to elaborate on it and I'm—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Yes, I hope.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: You were the one pushed this resolve so...

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: I said that earlier, that this was one of the things that he did tell me; that we can't do all these things, then leave small business to flounder. You have to find the ways and means to get funds to assist, and we have our own bank. Look at the *Hansard* when I moved it in 1994. That's when that law was moved and we changed from the committee that we had, doing agricultural development, et cetera, to the Development Bank. That's what we said then, but we haven't gotten that far.

Rules are far too stringent to help small businesses. Small businesses in Cayman need a lot of help because the first thing is, Caymanians who are looking to do small business don't have the wherewithal that the person coming from outside usually seems to have much of. They have the ways and means of getting it.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave the Motion with the facts in it, but it is up to Members' imagination as to what can be done. I do hope that most Members will be able to say yes to what we are trying [to do] and what we are thinking on this Motion.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Member for West Bay North.

Mr. Bernie A. Bush: Mr. Speaker. I, too, will be supporting this Motion, but I do hope it is not like in the past. I remember MLA Ellio Solomon bringing a Motion or a Bill before this House whereby certain jobs would be earmarked for Caymanians only; I also remember the Member for Bodden Town West and we have not followed through. There are many jobs—and don't bring up human rights and all this foolishness that

people like to throw up when it comes to something for us Caymanians.

Canada, Australia, all of those places have stuff for their indigenous people that is protected, so don't say it can't be done. Just in case some people don't know, some of us are indigenous. I do hope that if and when this is passed, or brought to fruition, we enforce it. Not just come in here, sit down, talk about it, give big, flowery speeches with all these statistics, do it, then we get out there and it's not done. Just like many things we complain about in this country; we have the laws, but we never enforce it because we're always offending somebody else at the “sufferation” of us Caymanians. I'm happy to see that this has come here today and I will be supporting it fully.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Minister for Climate.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also stand today to support Private Member's Motion No. 12 of 2023-2024.

Without spending much time speaking on the matter, because I know that the Mover has spoken in detail, I also agree that these areas can do with an amendment now. I think that the intent of the Law when it was created, was to promote participation that we did not have in the country and now that we've seen Caymanians thriving in these areas, we want to ensure that we can protect them and protect these industries for our Caymanian people. On that basis, I, too, will be supporting the Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister. Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, as the Mover, the honourable Member for West Bay West said, when he came and had a discussion with me about this Motion, I, too, recognised that to some extent there are laws already in the book that require majority ownership of businesses by Caymanians, but I wanted to have a better understanding in terms of where his headspace was— what it was that he was trying to achieve, before I agreed to second it.

After he explained where his headspace was, I started thinking about my own district of Bodden Town West, because like with anything else, all politics are local. I need to ensure that it is something that benefits not just my district, but pretty much all Caymanians.

One of the things that prompted me, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to ask the Serjeant-at-Arms to hand this out to the Members...

[Pause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I'll just wait until everyone has a copy of this map.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The map being handed around, Mr. Speaker, is an aerial map of the Cayman Islands, as per Google Earth. Members will see from that map that along the West Bay Road corridor, except for parts of West Bay, George Town and West Bay are pretty much fully developed. You can tell by the grey spaces.

The last open spaces are between Bodden Town, East End and North Side and one of the things we do recognise as we move forward, Mr. Speaker, and I'm hoping that this Government intends to move forward with the East-West Arterial— is, that it is going to open up development within the Cayman Islands. As you can see, where the roads are already there, those areas are developed. What we don't want, is that the minute the road goes on and the development starts to expand, those opportunities aren't taken advantage of by our people.

Simply put, Mr. Speaker, and this is one of the reasons that, as the Member for West Bay West said, I insisted on the Development Bank playing a role. The only way for any country to grow the economy is to pursue opportunities to expand the middle class, and the two main ingredients needed to expand any middle class are access to capital and access to credit— and it's very difficult, very challenging, to ask Caymanian residents and businesses to compete against foreigners coming into the country who have access to overseas capital.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, in my former life, when I was in banking, we actually got an opportunity to see how foreign banks would lend money to their residents to do business in the Cayman Islands, and then would ask our bank to hold the asset for them, put the charge over it, that kind of stuff, to secure their interests. That is one of the things that drive the idea that we need to make sure our people have access.

We have seen many developments in Caribbean Islands and many of those countries have what you refer to as EXIM Banks, or export import banks, that offer their citizens the ability to invest in other countries. We are now at a point where other countries are lending their citizens money to invest in Cayman, while our own people are having a challenge in terms of accessing credit or capital [from] the banks here.

That's one of the reasons I insisted we ensured, which the Mover agreed to very quickly, that we at least attempt to put in place the tools that will give our people the opportunity to take advantage as we develop the island progresses. Once the road is there, development will come, Mr. Speaker; whether it is a gas

station or residential lots, development will come. The population is growing.

At the same time, there is something we didn't really want to get into in this Motion. As you can see from the map, this is the last large swath of green space in Cayman. Recognising that we have challenges in terms of climate change, et cetera, we need to make sure that, when we do open this side of the island to development, at a minimum we do it very, very, very responsibly. We are living in an age when we are seeing category four and five hurricanes in the month of June. We recently dodged that bullet.

We need to sit down and start thinking about the future of this country. For thirty years we had roughly six LCCLs in this country— for the listening public, LCCLs are Local Company (Control) Licences, whereby if you can't find a majority Caymanian ownership you cannot apply for that exemption. If memory serves me right, those six companies were CUC, Cable & Wireless, Hadsphaltic, McAlpine, Texaco and Esso— six. Today, we have over two hundred, and if you go to the DCI website, most of them are actually in development.

The whole idea about this Motion, Mr. Speaker, is that, as we look at new horizons in the country, and at the existing opportunities our people can take, it is the time for us to start creating more Caymanian business people while simultaneously assisting them and working with them because, if you look at other countries' development, their Government plays a very large role. Whether is the development of the railroad network in the United States, or the train system in other countries that allowed commerce, goods and people to move, the Government played a part.

It's time for us now. While to some extent we may not have gotten the first phase of Cayman development right— and some will argue [over] whom we are developing for— at least when we open this door and start going down this route, we start making the right opportunities available for our people. That is what this Motion is calling for.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached a point in our development when we no longer need businesses that have 60 per cent Caymanian ownership; some businesses now need to be 100 per cent Caymanian-owned. If you look, in the United States, Canada and Europe, there are some businesses which for national security purposes have to be owned 100 per cent by the country's citizens or, to some extent, the Government— they do not allow certain [industries] to be foreign-controlled at all. We have lacked in that regard.

While this [Motion] may be the first step, or just opening the door, as we expand into areas such as cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence (AI), et cetera, the day will come, so it is something we need to start looking at. Later this year, once the US election goes into full effect, Members will see the damage that can be done or how serious things like AI can be, especially in the wrong hands. It is still a fledgling industry, yet we

already started seeing deepfake videos. We have seen how AI can take somebody's voice and have them say and do all kinds of things. These things are already starting to happen and it's only going to get better.

I know the Minister is going around now, and they're doing the community meetings for the PlanCayman development, et cetera, but at a minimum we need to ensure that once it is done and we start looking at where we need to go, the opportunities available are available to our people and that we are giving them the tools to be a part of the next Caymanian success chapter.

I want to thank the Mover for bringing the Motion. As I said to him, he may be old, but his ideas aren't cold and he still has some fight in him. I know that he is talking about retirement, but Mr. Bush, I believe that you still have some utility, you can be useful and it's good to see that you're still looking out and fighting for our people. It's something you have built your political foundation on, and I'm glad to see it's something that you continue to do.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I lend my support to this Motion and hope everyone feels the same way and supports the Motion as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give a few comments on the Private Member's Motion to increase ownership of businesses by Caymanians. On the face of it, the Motion makes sense and has much credibility to it. We know our Caymanian people are crying out for actions such as this in hopes that it will allow them to find their place in the growing economy. They see things happening and they feel that perhaps it's happening so quickly that they are not having an opportunity to participate.

Looking at the resolutions, I think all the businesses listed therein are interesting. Listening to the Mover of the Motion talk about construction, I think anything required to be done by a non-Caymanian company should be either an LCCL or a joint venture. I think one of the hotels being built at the moment might be a joint venture between an overseas firm and a local firm. Whether you want to put a cash limit on it, I don't know.

There are enough large [construction companies]. We used to call them the 'big two', now it's the 'big four' construction firms on Island—at least four. You look at the \$50 million project in Cayman Brac where you had local construction companies come together to be able to fund the project. I think in these cases... when the Ritz Carlton was being built, it was a joint venture (JV). That was the very first one. At the time I was on the Trade and Business Board, and I remember working with the Chairman, Miss Sherry-Anne

Cohen, to develop the joint venture to build the Ritz Carlton. That's all on the construction side. I thought, if you're going to go down that road, \$1.5 million is quite low. Most of the big firms these days won't touch anything below that anyhow; it's just not worth the mobilisation to build something at that level.

I think is something that, if the Government is going to do it, it's going to require quite a bit of public consultation. Perhaps do some research on the numbers out there. Interestingly, in my time as Minister, the two largest categories of trade and business licence were for janitorial and construction, so those would be easy ones to say there must be enough Caymanian companies now. I also know there were two large watersports companies for sale which struggled to find local buyers. In both instances, they went into contract and ended up with the contracts not being executed, and so the companies remained Caymanian for the time.

It reminds me, Mr. Speaker, of when I was Acting Chairman of the Trade and Business Licence Board and the then Government, led by the Honourable Kurt Tibbetts, issued a government policy to the Board saying that no LCCLs should be issued for under \$1 million. Back then (this was early 2000s, maybe late 90s) that was a lot of money. I remember an LCCL application coming in for some apartments in West Bay for about \$900,000, and we turned it down.

The Caymanian owner—a very prominent Caymanian—and his family, asked for an appointment with the board. He had just lost his job and they were going through a hard time. The apartments had fallen into disrepair; his home was the collateral for the mortgage, [and] this was the third application for an LCCL to purchase a property that we had refused. They came in, husband and wife, three children, and everybody—the gentleman, his wife and the three children—were crying. I'll never forget it; it left a mark on me. They said, *"We've had it up for sale for two years, we're going to lose our house. This was the third LCCL application to buy it that we submitted, because no one locally wants to buy it."*

We ended up reviewing it again. I think we even escalated it, as it was a Government policy, to allow this property to be sold to rescue this Caymanian family. When you think about it that way, you have to look at all perspectives. From the business perspective, when you limit the sale of your business to Caymanian-only, you're limiting it to a smaller pool of potential buyers. I'm just saying it is something we'll want to consider.

The other aspect I want to touch on, and the Member for Bodden Town West spoke about it, is the 60/40. It is my understanding that the 60/40 Trade and Business Licence minimum of 60 per cent Caymanian ownership and 60 per cent Caymanian directorship, was designed to allow Caymanians to seek investors at a time when funding, especially for larger projects,

wasn't readily available locally, but even to just start businesses.

I can think of many Caymanian businesses that started that way. My own father's business started with investors and then became 100 per cent Caymanian-owned; but I think what has happened over the years, Mr. Speaker, is that the 60/40 has reversed. It has reversed to where, [from] the little carpenter to the multi-billionaire, are coming to Cayman looking for a 60 per cent partner who is happy, and sometimes think they're doing a good thing.

I use this example all the time. I remember speaking to an acquaintance who moved to Cayman. He got his status, paid his dues. He had a sailboat; ran around in it for the first couple of years, then got bored and the boat sat there. Then he thought he was doing a good thing when he met a young European— or I think the young man was from New Zealand or Austria. He said, *"Well, I have a sailboat sitting there, why don't we form a company and you can run it. Use the boat, since it is not being used."*

He thought he was just doing a good thing, but when I sat down and gave him the other perspective— *Do you realise that you just handed this guy a half a million-dollar boat to go out and compete with the little Stingray City guys in West Bay, who are struggling and fighting out there at the cruise ship docks to get a couple of people to take out?* He didn't think about it that way. He said, *"Oh my God. I didn't realise that."* Now, if he had found a young Caymanian to take the boat, that's a different thing. He actually didn't see that perspective.

Then you have the flip side where you have the multimillionaire coming in and meeting someone and they're like, *"Yeah, sure. I'll be a partner."* *"Oh, well, what, what can we do?"* *"I don't need anything out of it, you know; take me out for dinner every now and then,"* or whatever the case is, and they don't think anything is wrong with that either— but then that multimillionaire is opening hair salons and gyms and starting construction companies and doing developments all over the Island, competing with everybody.

The Caymanian developer who thinks he's buying a piece of land where he can put down a few apartments, but next thing you know, a guy comes in and offers the asking price because money is not a big deal. It's a Caymanian company, but it's because they use the 60/40 the way it was not intended. It was intended for Caymanians to find persons to invest, so how can we deal with that? Maybe now we say that, if you are a 40 per cent-or-less shareholder in a Caymanian company you cannot work for the company. Maybe you will have to prove in the application that you are simply a funding mechanism for the company.

Perhaps it is, even, that the company is representing a company you own overseas and you're supplying them with stuff, but when the company is being formed, you are not going to work in and run the company. *Dr. So-and-so* or *Mrs. Mary* down the street is my

60 per cent Caymanian owner, and I'm *gonna* go and do a \$10 million development. That's not the way it was designed, that's not what it was designed for.

We can approach it in a different way as well. Maybe we need to look at that 60/40 rule. Maybe we need to tighten that up a little bit, to ensure that it's there for what it is intended for because, on the flip side, if I wanted to start a farm and I found a young fellow from overseas who's a good farmer, and I said, *"All right, let's you and I go into business. You're doing the work and I'll be the 60 per cent shareholder,"*— but in that case, why don't I just say to him come and work for me? Why don't we say we'll make a profit sharing? When you have those legitimate instances, it can be resolved otherwise. There are ways to deal with that.

What we need to stop is the outright, blatant fronting.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I have reported several cases. It seems almost impossible for DCI to convict any of them or find evidence under the Law, so maybe there needs to be changes to the Law. Maybe there needs to be a tightening of the Law that will allow easier prosecution, because I've never heard of a case of fronting.

I remember years ago when I was on the board, there was a divorce case over a business and the lady wrote to the business [sic] to say, *"My husband and I divorced. I want to know what his 60 per cent share is and how much he's getting out of it."* Had her lawyers write, rather. The overseas lawyers—it was a big business, a little hotel actually—wrote back to the lady's lawyer and said, *"Your husband is only a 60 per cent shareholder for administrative purposes and has never received any benefits from the business."*

We handed it over to legal and that went nowhere. There's never, ever been a prosecution for fronting, and it is blatant. It is all over the place from the lowest to the highest and like I said, many people who are doing it don't understand. They don't realise that they're actually jeopardising someone else's livelihood when they do that. They think they're being nice and that's a nice guy— or it would be good. This is a good kind of people to have in Cayman. True! They can go out and spend money in the economy and all that kind of stuff, but it doesn't mean that we have to help them open a business to compete with our own people.

I think those are some of the areas we can look at, Mr. Speaker, to start tightening the regime so that Caymanians will have the opportunities without the risk of impacting the values of their businesses or impacting the local economy when it comes to growth.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, there's real merit to the Motion. There's much in here that the Government can look at, can find ways to deal with it, maybe enhance it even more, maybe take it further, who knows, but I think

that will require data, public consultation, et cetera to ensure that we get it right when we do it.

Mr. Speaker, the second part of the resolved portion of the Motion. The housing Motion that I brought at the last sitting, which we asked a question on this morning, and the Honourable Minister of Planning said that there was progress in a report on dealing with housing. I think this fits right in line with that. Whether it's land or housing, that when anyone is developing—especially if it's a large scale development where it has environmental impacts, et cetera—somehow Government negotiates out of that, whether it's physical units within that place or funding to go into purchasing land to develop housing for Caymanians. It fits right in line with the development of housing used in partnership with the private sector that I brought in November. Sorry, not at the last sitting, in November.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Mover of the Motion for the bold step. No one has ever accused him of not trying to defend his people, better his people, and no one has ever accused him of not being bold. He said he asked for a lot. I think he gave us a lot to think about. He gave the government much to look at. We have no issue in principle with what this Motion is asking for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker,

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Minister for Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to start off by saying and putting on the record that this Motion does have an area that focuses on real estate, property and ownership and though my wife is not an owner, she works in the real estate industry. I just want to put that on the record, for clarity.

Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to thank the Mover and the seconder for bringing yet more opportunities for areas of consideration for the Government and all of us as Members of Parliament in the eventuality of changes being proposed to this honourable House.

I want to second the point that was just raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The first sentence from the mover of the motion, he said, “*Mr. Speaker, I know I am asking for a lot.*” I want us to bear that in mind, motions are drafted in a particular way that doesn't come from the Cabinet because it wouldn't be a direct decision, it would be a Bill; but it's definitely everything that needs to be considered.

I wanted to chime in on some parts of the Motion that I think we've discussed, in some way, shape or form, over the last three years and potentially even past administrations; namely, land purchases and properties for Caymanians because I think that home-ownership and property ownership are easily within the top ten issues within the Cayman Islands. I've started my campaign officially and I've already started doing my surveying, and that's already in the top five. I dare

say, I think it's going to end up being either third or second, based on the figures as they're coming in.

I'm not surprised by that, Mr. Speaker, hence the reason I've been such an advocate for the continuation and the development of the East-West Arterial. When it comes to property ownership, you may be hearing me talking about roads, but it's not because of the road, but because of land availability. I believe in the simple principles of supply and demand. Right now, the availability of land and property to be developed is only based on land that has roads to it.

Hypothetically speaking, if our land mass was 100 per cent, we may really only have access to about 30 per cent of the land in the Cayman Islands. Going back to the principles of supply and demand, if you increase the supply of something, you bring down the prices. What we have been doing is not allowing the proper road development to happen in areas where land is potentially available for development to proceed, which would help with the situation. Rather, what we're doing is allowing, as per what the Motion is suggesting, more non-Caymanian persons to do land banking.

Mr. Speaker, I recall reading an article about what was happening in Vancouver, Canada, where they had a major problem with the Chinese who were purchasing the condos and apartments so much that they had a rental problem. They were buying it and just land banking it, because they had nothing else to do with their money.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Huh?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Plus, they got a passport out of purchasing the properties.

Mr. Speaker, it became a bad situation to the point where they had to bring in legislation to say, if you own property and you are not staying in that property at least six months out of the year, that you would be taxed up to 25 per cent of the value of the property, in order to slow down the property grab that was happening. Ultimately, they had homeless people; they couldn't build enough, fast enough.

Mr. Speaker, Vancouver didn't believe in continuing to develop, they wanted to counteract it. I personally think it is time for us to also consider that. Now, I'm not suggesting here that a Caymanian who wants to buy 3, 4, or 5 lots, if you're a Caymanian I think you should have the privilege to do so and I stand to be corrected, but Mr. Speaker, at this moment, a person can come off the plane, buy three apartments without getting a business licence, rent them out and make a profit off of it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: It's over two that they have to have the licence.

Mr. Speaker, if you think about how many people are out there in the world who are in a position to be able to do that— even just two— and they don't have to pay any fees on them outside of the duties once it's transferred, and they're making profits. No different than a person opening up a small convenience store and having to pay licensing fees and so forth. I think they should be paying them, especially if they're non-Caymanian, because you're technically operating a business for profit. On top of that, I'm not trying to ruin the sales market in any capacity, but the demand is so heavy that you're placing the real estate market out of the reach of Caymanians.

Either we slow it, down or we speed up the supply. At this particular point, I wouldn't want to suggest the first because there are other people depending on it out there, in the market. Part of our economy, outside of financial services and tourism, is a small development section. We make money off the duties of the materials coming in; we've got people within the engineering and construction industries and so forth; we have persons who are in smaller trades, like tiling, plumbing, roofing, shingling, electrical, finish work, sheet-rock, et cetera, so there are people's livelihoods on that.

What I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to figure out a way not to affect those persons in a negative way, but at the same time, have enough supply on the market for Caymanians who need homes. The only way we're going to do that is to address the issue of the East-West Arterial or even further major arterial roads, to open up access to other lands that we have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the discussion about the wetlands is a very sensitive one. Thankfully, I got the opportunity to get a little vacation in Port Canaveral, Orlando, and you have to take a major highway through some wetlands, right? The road seemed perfectly fine. I didn't hear about the wetlands on either side dying, and the road has been efficient and effective probably for longer than I have been alive, because I know Port Canaveral has been there since before I was born, so I don't understand the reluctance to push this forward when we've been...

I don't want to go on with this fight with the environmental movement again, but I am so adamant that this push back is affecting the people's quality of life on so many levels! Not only their emotional state, but their financial ability— because of all this pushback, by the time we get the road done the house prices are *gonna* quadruple! This road is not only about safety as you heard on a previous Motion. God forbid. *How ya say?* One lane up and one lane down, after a 500 per cent increase in population in the eastern districts.

Matter of fact Mr. Speaker, what we need to start planning for, and I've brought this to my

colleagues' attention and we've been mulling over it for some time, and hence the reason the Honourable Minister of Development and Infrastructure, the Honourable Jay Ebanks—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: The Minister for Planning— thank you, Honourable Acting Premier— is now starting to focus on PlanCayman; because the truth, Mr. Speaker, and I'll go on record saying this regardless of the fallout, is that we need to build a new town outside the western side of this Island—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: There's no way we can control the traffic with every single soul coming from the East to the West, every morning, and vice versa. Everybody who came down has to go back later on in the evening. It's just not going to work.

Matter of fact, it should be the Government's policy that no more government buildings are built west of Prospect. The truth is, we are not in a position to be building any major government offices at this point, because of the finances associated with other projects that the Government is doing, which do not affect the traffic control. Regardless of this administration or the next, I do not believe that any more major infrastructure from a Government perspective should be built on this side. We need to start thinking about our grandchildren, and build a town to the East which has industrial areas, a school and neighbourhood area and a hospital close by.

Mr. Speaker, we may have had our share of battles, but one thing I tell them when I'm on the road, is that nobody can stop Sir Alden McLaughlin's vision when he built the schools. They may complain and say the schools were expensive, but your vision— I remember, because I was there behind you as a little pup in politics!

You said in order to develop, you have to build a school, a supermarket, a hospital. We now need to start building the homes, and work with our Caymanian developers and say we can earmark sections for you, for businesses. Then we'll have persons in the eastern districts who can work down that side, and don't have to leave because they can go to school there, go to the hospital, they can shop there and they can live there! You know how many East Enders say "*I didn't want to come town*"? They hate when they even have to come, because East Enders are a different breed. They like the chill life.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we don't start planning like that—Why are we not sitting with the Kirkconnells, the Boddens, the Fosters, the McFields; all the good, strong, quality Caymanians who made a success of themselves? What are we *gonna* do? Wait for Dart to

go there, buy up the land and develop a new town down there like what they're doing in Camana Bay? I'm not suggesting that Camana Bay is bad; what I'm suggesting, is that we need to start planning to ensure that it's a Caymanian town that is built, because it's inevitable, Mr. Speaker.

What we have to do is stop thinking short-term, and the prevention of that road, is short-term thinking. Those who oppose it, I beg you for the benefit of the country, please start to think how can we get it done, rather than trying to be in the way. It has to happen! They don't want the building heights to go up so you can have more apartment complexes in one land zone. They don't want you to open up the land so you can build on more land that is available. What do you want? How do we resolve these problems? Now we're in the territory of thinking about different tax structures to deal with the housing problem, because of people being in the way over silliness, for things that are inevitable! Come on.

Mr. Speaker, it really annoys me because there's a suggestion that the Government or anybody who is in favour of strategic, common sense development and infrastructure, is here to kill the environment. There's nobody in this building who wants to harm the environment, but we have to protect our people's lives and their livelihoods. I keep on reminding people, that sustainability is not only the environment. Sustainability, by its definition, is the economy, the people *and* the environment; equally three parts.

Mr. Speaker, that topic is going to be a major component of the next election, because the people want to know what any elected Government is going to do to get them out of traffic, where are they *gonna* live, where are their children *gonna* live, and how are they *gonna* have decent jobs—and we have an opportunity. There are billionaire Caymanians out there now, not only millionaires; and we, as a people, need to sit down and say, “*All of you have done well for yourselves. We trust you more than anybody else.*” Bring the fifty of them in one room, and say, “*Listen, if anybody is gonna have it, I want you to have it,*” and figure out a plan together; give them concessions, so they can build something that is Caymanian-driven. That's what we need to do, and stop getting in the way.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Dr. the Honourable William McKeeva Bush, and the Member for Bodden Town West for bringing this Motion because, though it is asking the Government to consider much, as the Member recognised, but I'm glad he brought it, because it's time to stop nit-picking and start talking reality. Matter of fact, I think it was him that said it best, we're here fighting with each other while the elephants—how'd it go? Where's he gone? I can't remember the saying he used. Mr. Speaker, help me. Do you remember how the story goes? He will tell me afterwards, but it goes basically, we're here fighting each other while elephants are stomping us—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: An African proverb.

What we have to do is start fighting for each other. Caymanians, I want you to listen: Many people will come here and tell you foolishness. The reason why we've been successful is we've always been practical people. We've never been a people who are malicious in any capacity. Matter of fact, if we were stronger for ourselves, we wouldn't be so blasé with everybody else who comes to this country and takes advantage. It's time to start looking at your neighbour, no matter how many arguments *unna* had, and say, “*You is a Caymanian, we're in this together,*” and band together, because people will tell you foolishness for their own interests. Get to the bottom of their conversation and find out why. Ask [yourself] whether your own people would want to undermine you.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I'm blown away by some of the comments I hear. Thank God for people like Graham Rankin that will call in the radio and be *practical*. As my forefathers would say, “*Come on now, nobody nuh here to ruin it.*” Have we gotten it all right? No, because we have developed so fast. We're the victims of our own success. No other Caribbean country has developed as fast as we have, where I can now go and talk to somebody who used to use a toilet outside in a shit pot—Sorry, is that allowed, Mr. Speaker, as parliamentary language?

The Speaker: I didn't hear it.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Okay. Thank you.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: I have the privilege of knowing the soldiers, mothers and fathers who built the successes, so that I can sit on *slate*! I'm in a Parliament with *slate* that came from Wales. The slate in this House came from the lands of Wales. You know how successful our forefathers have been to build—? Look at the mahogany. We have people still alive who used to burn bush to run away the mosquitoes, while excusing themselves outside in a hole. People like that built companies and became billionaires. That's how wonderful our people have been.

Get back to what you know, don't make people fool you. There's nobody here, nobody *nuh* turn a millionaire overnight, being in Parliament. Matter of fact, you come in here, you'll be more broke by the time you get out. You understand? We're here to fight for you, but sometimes people will put things in your ear, just because they have their own interests hidden behind closed doors. We need the road. We need to be able to get the land to give your children an opportunity to

have a piece of the Caymanian pie. Don't make anybody get in the way of that.

Mr. Speaker, housing is a serious issue, because if you don't own this country, you're going to lose this country. There are Caymanians who own *large* plots of land and are suffering, when they know that somebody can come and say, "*Oh, I'll give you US\$3 billion for that.*" They say, "*You know what, I'd rather sit here and suffer rather than go on retirement, because I'm not giving it to you. I'd rather wait till the road comes, so I can plot it up into little spots and give it to a Caymanian for a house.*" Thank God for them, because otherwise, all the land would be done gone!

I had a conversation with one of my own constituents, saying how somebody came to him about that. He said, "*No, I've got enough. I can survive. I'm not giving it. I don't care how much money you bring. Eventually a road will come, and I will be able to make sure—he is from the old school—one little McField, one little Seymour, one little Ebanks and one little McLaughlin get a little piece. Unna got enough.*" If we do not put the infrastructure in, we're not going to be able to give the Caymanians anything!

Mr. Speaker, the good Elected Member for Bodden Town West just provided this honourable House with a map. Look at it. You can see how much green we have. I want my good people to listen to me clearly: Here's what they're doing. I'm going to block off the wetland, then I'm going to block off the Reserve land, and then I'm going to block off, necessarily, the agricultural land. Where are people going to live? Where are the people going to live?!

Are they going to live in the developed area, where you get one piece of land in George Town that costs you half a million dollars? You *nuh* buy the house yet, that's just the land! Where are they going to live? We have to stop playing games and be more practical. We are here. Did we develop it right? No, we haven't, but we are here now. I don't want to be a part of a future where our Caymanians are homeless. We're practically at that point now. I'm scared when I drive out at night. It's *gonna* get really bad.

I'm *gonna* ask you guys a question. You had a past Government, and you have a current Government that want to ensure that the infrastructure is there, to allow ownership and roofs over people's head. Do not make people get in your way. The Minister is one of the strongest Members—I am proud to be a partner of his—who stands in front of anybody and will say, "*I want it done,*" while forces are fighting against him. You must ask who they are and what they're about. *Unna* come for me—I'm from George Town Central, I'm the one who said it—but it's time for it to stop.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Yeah, I should have been the Minister of Planning. I would have run the bulldozer myself. He's more patient than

me. None of them come into George Town Central when my people are outside and mosquitos are eating them, because they have nowhere to live—and I have no answers for them, because the land is too expensive! Here's what they want us to do, Mr. Speaker, they want us to build houses on land that costs more than the actual building of the house. You can't build a house in George Town and be practical, the Government would be in debt! We can't. Where are you going to build the houses?

You know what we're doing right now? You see the supplementaries we approved, all the land acquisitions? \$14 million more than what we had last year, from buying land and *subsidising* the land prices to give away. All the people who are on the list to have a house today, if we could give that to them tomorrow, it would probably take up the \$2 billion in our budget. Think about that. Still, we are saying we need to get to closer land. Again, supply and demand, Mr. Speaker.

If we don't have the road, if you don't add available land to the market... Only then can the prices go down. Now, I'm not going to pretend like it won't affect some people with respect to land property values and so forth, but you can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't say, well, houses are unaffordable for Caymanians, while at the same time your particular piece of property stays high.

What are we *gonna* do? Unless we're okay with the Government taking further loans to just make sure there's a roof over a Caymanian head—and I tell you what, if there is one priority for me as an elected Member, it is to ensure that every Caymanian has a house they can call their own, so they can be proud to be a Caymanian! If you don't have a house for yourself in Cayman, how can you say you're Caymanian? Then the question of, "*Who are we building for?*" comes in.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet has kept me under control by collective responsibility, but we're getting close to the election now. I'm begging my good people of the Cayman Islands, particularly those of George Town Central who have given me the opportunity. I know you know how I operate. I'm a pretty straightforward person, but don't let people tell you nonsense. We've always been practical people in our thinking. As a matter of fact, when they come to you with nonsense, listen to me carefully. My job is to look out for my people, and my children and grandchildren. Nobody here wants to undermine our own nation, but we have to survive. We have to have a roof over our head. We have to be able to get to and from work within a reasonable period of time.

Mr. Speaker, you know what's going to happen when you and I retire? I think you're going to live a long time, so by the time I retire you will still be around. You're probably going to be on your farm and you and I can talk about how bad it was in Parliament then, but here's what's going to happen. There's going to be a study later on in history about this time period, and people are going to say the rates of suicides in the

Cayman Islands jumped during a particular period. Then the sociologists are going to start thinking and saying, “*Well, what happened?*” Was it COVID shots? What was it, and eventually, they are going to come to a conclusion: It was the pressure we allowed on our people.

Without the comfort of knowing there was a means to an end, it caused people so much stress, suicide rates happened plus poor eating habits, lack of exercise and stress levels. Wait till we dive into the death rate and whether it's changing or not. I had to bury—not me, personally, but my community had to deal with the loss; you heard how many obituaries I read when we started on Tuesday? My people are dying. They're dropping every single week. While I was on vacation, I had three unexplained deaths in one day!

Mr. Speaker, our people deserve better and I'm going to tell you what our biggest problem is, sometimes: trying to please too many people. I'm getting fed up with that though, you know? Getting fed up with that... You're trying to be nice, you're expected to be, “*Oh, I'm a good Minister.*” You have to act appropriately and you can't speak like this, can't speak like that, yet our people saying, “*Wha you doing? Wha you got to show for it?*” Right?

People are getting fed up with that; and I'll be honest, I'm getting fed up with it because I came here—started on that side to come here; to be able to deliver, to prove that we can get things done. Then you get these organised groups getting in the way of practical things and you sit down and try to have practical conversations with them, but you can see that they have no intention to get to the same place. Even if you say, “*Come on, let's give a little, let's meet half-way*”, they'll say, “*No, no, no, you need to come all the way over here to me.*”

I've said before, I think I was sitting right here; we're going to get to a point where people are so frustrated, they're not going to want to hear your argument or your rationality. They're going to be so mad, they can pick a group of people to come in this House that would tear down everything in sight and just build whatever they want to build. We got to be more reasonable in our approaches.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, I know I'm taking up some time, but I need to get this off my chest. I do apologise. I remember sitting down over there in Opposition, right where the honourable Member for West Bay West is sitting, and the former Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Arden McLean sat there, as well as the Honourable former Leader of Opposition—interestingly enough, they switched out—Ezzard Miller; speaking about trying to increase the levels of development within certain areas so apartment structures can be a little higher, so Caymanians can get more.

As soon as you mention anything, they find every excuse in the whole world to say no, while the Caymanian population is getting larger. Mostly by immigration, because we're not reproducing enough

Caymanians; and when they become Caymanians, they are part of our family. Like the Honourable Dr. McKeever Bush said, whether you like it or not, they are ours. They are part of this family and they're on this boat now so embrace that, because fighting it *makes no sense*. We've got to make sure that we're on common ground, so there's loads of them and nowhere to go, and every time you offer something, “*What about building heights?*”

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier:

They're going to go in the ground? We're talking about opportunity and growth. Do they realise that, you don't want to go up no higher? Well, if they don't go up, they're going to go out, so which one is it?

I'm going to wrap it up now. I'm glad that the Member brought this Bill, because it tells me there are so many options available for us to consider. I guess what we need to do, is to just stop being afraid and put our foot down, and kind of do what the former Government did. I'm going to give you a cookie this evening, Mr. Speaker. You were right about the port, and they are going to come around. You were right.

We may need to put our foot down, but we can't do it with only us understanding it; we have to do it with the people understanding, and that's why I'm being as blunt as I am today, because I know my good people of Cayman listen to these [Sittings]. At least the good old-school Caymanians, sit down and listen to Radio Cayman and say, “*Oh, I'm listening to Bryan. Bryan hot to-night!*” They will listen and pass it down to their children. The seniors will say, “*Listen to me now. We're going with Sabrina, we're going with Jay, we're going with Kenneth, we're going with André. This is who we're voting for.*” I know they're listening, and I want them to know that this Parliament still has your traditional Caymanians with common sense, but we need your strength for those who are opposing practical approaches to help you!

You see, they send me in here and say, “*Oh, he's gonna be too aggressive. He can't be a Minister. He can't be doing this. Don't send him inside that House.*” Well, sometimes you need to be a little bit more assertive so people can understand, because we're not here for fun and games, we're here to produce outcomes—and I can't say with full authority that I've succeeded in that yet, because I'm *not* satisfied. I can't even ask young Caymanians to come home! Come home to what?! We can't even build a road! *Three years* in this administration, and the road can't go through because people are trying to stop it. Meanwhile, we're trying to build the road to get people out of traffic and try to get more homes built. What are they going to come home to?

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, I had to get it out, and I thank you for allowing me to. You had plenty of opportunity to stop me, and you didn't, so I appreciate that.

With that being said, that was the contribution that I gave on my behalf. I know the Acting Premier will speak on behalf of the Government. I'm glad that this Motion came. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister; welcome to my world. Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Acting Premier.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to, hopefully, make a concise contribution to the debate on this Motion, which I think, Mr. Speaker, presents the House and this Government with a golden opportunity. I'd like to thank the Mover and the second-order for bringing the Motion.

I think I'll start in a place where I believe the Deputy Leader of the Opposition started, because he's been standing in my shoes. It will be indicative of where I believe we are as a country, as we can draw a broad parallel to other pieces of legislation in this Meeting. Mr. Speaker, a number of the legislation pieces in our statute books were developed for a different age in Cayman, and now that we have become a sophisticated financial services and commerce centre, we need to revisit a number of pieces of legislation.

Even as we've grown in sophistication as a society, we have to change, and that is even outside of business. Mr. Speaker, I recall earlier this week how vociferous you were in your comments on the Firearms Bill of a historical hangover about custody and handing firearms to the police, that I think a number of people that day hadn't realised was actually part of the existing legislation, not even in the Amendment Bill that we were bringing. I presume it was developed at a time and place when Cayman was different, and nobody recognised that it was still there.

The Minister for Health has reformed the Pharmacy Act, and if you read the legislation as it stands versus her amendment Bill, it will look ridiculous in this time and place. That's the parallel that I seek to draw with the Trade and Business Law and the Local Company (Control) Law. It was developed at a time and place for the purposes that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition outlined.

What this Motion calls for, is for us to be innovative and create reforms and enact reforms that are more fitting for the time and place. To give the facts that the Member for Bodden Town West [mentioned], as at 30th June, there are approximately 209 Local Company (Control) Law licenses now. That is at its lowest since 2020, and there are a couple of reasons for that.

One, is that this administration gave a broad informal mandate to the board, to refuse LCCLs which you can obviously see that Caymanians can do. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, you may recall that at the last Meeting of the House in February, the Government put forward and I presented, the Local Companies (Control) (Amendment) Bill. That was to allow Cabinet

to set fees under that legislation by way of regulations. That provided the enabling provision for us to reset some of the fees that were just grossly out of date; by also adding fee deterrents, we're starting to see a decrease in LCCLs, because some of them were just too cheap.

Members may recall that during the presentation of that Bill I mentioned that the Ministry's policy team had already begun to look at some of the categories. Once they got on the hunt for the fees, they began to look at the categories and started to point out, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition mentioned, the number of certain businesses. You stagger to know there are that many janitorial businesses in the Cayman Islands. What are they all doing? Do we know what they're all doing? They've already begun to touch on some of these categories, and one that jumped out to the team was real estate agents.

There are a number of real estate agents that are constituents in West Bay South and are multigenerational Caymanians, so I asked, as part of informal constituency feedback. I bounced it off of five or six multigenerational Caymanian real estate agents. I said, how would you all feel if the Government moved towards making this category, 100 per cent Caymanian-owned? This was way before I even knew the Member for West Bay West was going to bring this Motion. This was at the time when we were presenting the LCCL Amendment Bill in February, when the policy team was beginning to make these discoveries.

You know it's serious, when a constituent departs from calling you Minister—and I'm sure with your experience, Mr. Speaker, you must have gotten this—and says, *"André, if you all bring that, now your Government is starting to do something to help because there's no reason why that category cannot be conducted purely by Caymanians. We would have the Parliament's back."* Again, the legislation was developed at a different time and place, so I do agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that this is a golden opportunity to have consultation, and touch on the categories where it's blindingly obvious that Caymanians can do with 100 per cent; and start to think of innovative categories, because what you don't want is to be too rash, and have something backfire.

I mentioned to the Member for West Bay West earlier today that, in conferring with the policy team in the Commerce Ministry, for example, in [regards to] one of the resolves, a moratorium on the issuance of Local Control Law licenses, we kind of rounded the houses with the board and they said, *'We would interpret that to mean a general moratorium,'* so the broad mandate that the Minister already gave; but you wouldn't necessarily want to make it absolute because there could be a completely specialised business that could come to Cayman, that wants to move from a different jurisdiction.

The board would feel hamstrung and handcuffed that we can't get this business that wants to

migrate to Cayman because of this rule. For example, a number of the airlines here operate on LCCLs. Their shareholding structures come as it is, so it's either we want the route, or we don't. They said, *"We don't want to get tied up and maybe lose a business that would benefit the Islands overall, where the share structure is for the overall benefit of the country, but there's not a Caymanian that could do it,"* but there will also be other tiers where there could be a pool of Caymanians that could do it.

You'd want to have a little bit of flexibility; so we would interpret that as a general, broad moratorium, but there would be some highly specialised exceptions. That's some of the stuff that would come through in public consultation. You could have a situation where you have a genuine multigenerational Caymanian small business, two or three Caymanians, maybe it's a technology company, becomes successful, grows; and then they want to sell to a large global company and feel restricted that they can't. We lose their opportunity to become multimillionaires. It could happen with technology companies and AI companies,

The Chamber of Commerce did an economic forum at the beginning of the year where there was an IT session, and one of the local IT companies said it's only a matter of time before the world sees the one person, billion-dollar company, that could be based on software. We do need to think about the anomalies and be able to have a somewhat flexible regime, and not stunt the potential growth for a young Caymanian.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, the last resolve, in terms of access to capital and more funding for CIDB and the Member for Bodden Town West's discussion on access to capital. I think the Mover of the Motion recognised that it could not all rest on Government—realistically, there's only so much money that you can put in the Development Bank—but there are other tools.

At the moment, the Ministry of Investment and Innovation's team is working with the Financial Services team on a platform, on a policy that is called crowd funding, that is a more sophisticated version, for investment purposes, of—if Members of the House have heard of GoFundMe where, perhaps a family can't afford a costly medical operation and members of the community chip-in a few dollars each? This would be a more graduated form of that, where investors can pool in money.

This was discussed at a Raising Capital Forum that the Cayman Islands Business Development Centre put on just a few weeks ago. Let us say there are now multigenerational, multimillionaire Caymanians; if a young Caymanian start-up needs \$150,000 - \$200,000. That may not be palatable for a local bank, it may not even be palatable for one multimillionaire but a pool of them might say, *all right, I'll chip in 25, I'll chip in 50, I'll chip in 75*, into a crowdfunding pool platform, in the event that the actual business starts up and begins to make money, and they get a return.

My point is that it's not solely on the Government in order to fund the Development Bank to an amount that is not fiscally prudent. There are other policy changes that we can make to facilitate more joint ventures that the private sector can facilitate.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we as a Government accept the Motion. I think it will be an innovative—and I hope energising—exercise, that we can all participate in. Once the commerce policy team begins, in short order, to flesh out some of these proposals and draw the outline of what the consultation would be, I look forward to working not only with the Mover of the Motion, and of course, colleagues in Caucus but across the aisle, to draw on some of the ideas which have been put forward today, in order to innovate this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity for a brief comment and contribution of what I think is a useful Motion.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] If not, I'll ask the Honourable Mover of the Motion to exercise his right of reply.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank everyone for their input. I do want to thank the Acting Premier and the Minister of Tourism who spoke for the membership on this side; the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who spoke for the other side; and certainly, I want to thank the seconder of the Motion.

I am pleased to have support from the Cabinet, as I know some of their thought process in trying to get things done. Some of this Motion needs to be done quickly, but the bureaucracy set up in this country is what it is. It is maddening—that's what it is. Government can't move as quickly as our people need them to; but as a Cabinet, they can decide how to address the issues that have not been decided on yet, whatever Cabinet is doing. Of course, Cabinet is a driving force in getting these matters done.

I think the issue that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about can easily be addressed, because the Motion is designed to help Caymanians, not to disadvantage them. We don't want to do that. I've never been one who didn't want to give Caymanians something, however, once it was legal, if they dealt with the man in the moon, well, it's their business. We do have to come to a place where certain businesses can be left for our people, and that's what the Motion is all about.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to hold up any longer. I am very satisfied that the House feels the way it does, some more passionately than others, like the Minister of Tourism; but let us give God thanks for our Islands, as everybody—not everybody, thank God. There are those who are playing their politics and want to say how bad things are in Cayman and how much better they can make it. I doubt it. Some of them will

have to take a long time to learn because they believe that you can just say, that's it. When they get in those seats, they will understand that it is so easy to say, but so difficult to do.

Our job is to protect Cayman in a world that is ever changing. With over one hundred nationalities here, we have to protect Cayman. See that our culture is not dissolved, that our children and grandchildren and our posterity are taken care of. As I said, I have great hope for this country. We have good people in this House. Not to say that I agree with everybody, but I don't think there's anybody here who wants to see any harm come to this country, no matter what they talk about.

They talk about the environment, about we're destroying this, and not getting that. As I said, what do they want? I heard the Minister of Tourism ask that, too. What do they want?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: That's it. *"I got. I don't want you to get. You don't need to get."* That's the thought process. *"I made my money now and let's stop it, shut it down."* Sorry, I can't agree with that. We've got too many things to do and too many people to protect, so we must continue to develop. We must continue to do a better job of protecting our children and grandchildren, and those who come here to live with us and move and have their being. That's our job.

Thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for your patience, and thank all Members for their spoken support and otherwise.

The Speaker: The question is:

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that Government considers taking immediate steps to amend the Trade and Business Act to increase the percentage ownership by Caymanians from 60% to 100% for the following business activities:

1. Real Estate sales and property management companies
2. Construction businesses up to KYD \$1.5 million
3. Car rentals
4. Watersports operations
5. Light technology up to KYD \$2.5 million.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government places a moratorium on the issuance of Local Companies Control Licenses.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers immediately taking the necessary steps to ensure that properties in Cayman are purchased and set aside for Caymanians only, by the following means:

1. That foreign developers building apartments, hotels and such developments pay to the Government a 5 per cent fee off the top of the value of said developments;

2. That such funds be set aside by the Government to purchase properties that are earmarked to be purchased by Caymanians only;
3. That when such properties are purchased by Caymanians it cannot be used for "land banking" and can only be sold to another Caymanian; and
4. That the maximum amount of lots that can be bought by any Caymanian through the above means, be two lots.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Government considers taking the necessary steps to ensure that the Cayman Islands Development Bank is given the necessary resources to assist qualified Caymanian business and qualified Caymanian entrepreneurs with the necessary funding to engage in business activities that are owned 100 per cent by Caymanians.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 12 of 2023-2024 passed.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I propose to take a brief evening suspension now. Shall we return at 7:15 by the clock in this Chamber? My watch is five minutes faster.

Proceedings suspended at 6:52 pm.

Proceedings resumed at 7:16 pm.

The Speaker: Parliament is resumed.

Private Member's Motion No. 13 of 2023-2024
Motion on temporarily reducing to zero per cent the duty charged by Government on imports of
(1) fuels purchased by utility providers,
(2) fuels for cooking gas, and
(3) automotive fuels, including diesel

The Speaker: I recognise the Honour Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Private Members Motion No. 13, standing in my name, entitled: Temporarily reducing to zero per cent the duty charged by Government on imports of (1) fuels purchased by utility providers, (2) fuels for cooking gas, and (3) automotive fuels, including the diesel. The Motion reads:

WHEREAS, over the past two years, the cost of most imported goods has increased due to the impact of the pandemic and the Ukraine war;

AND WHEREAS although the March 2024 Consumer Price Index showed an increase of 1.5 per cent in overall inflation over the year, higher increases are still seen in key segments— housing and utilities increased by 2.6 per cent; Household Repairs increased by 3.5 per cent; Health Costs increased by 2 per cent; Communication Costs increased by 7.4 per cent; Education Costs increased by 7.9 per cent; and Rents increased by 11.1 per cent.

AND WHEREAS since 2021, the cost of essentials like groceries, utilities and gasoline increased in the Cayman Islands by over 25 per cent, helping create a severe cost-of-living crisis, significantly increasing the cost of living for families and the cost of doing business;

AND WHEREAS the increased cost of living has been exacerbated by the significantly increased cost of bank financing and mortgage payments, property insurance costs, and health insurance costs;

AND WHEREAS the increased fuel costs, including cooking fuels, have a broad impact, affecting a wide range of the average consumer's and business' monthly bills, including utility costs, cost of groceries, transportation costs, food preparation costs, and more;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands Government has benefited from a windfall in additional import duty because of the significantly increased cost of goods and freight.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that to give some financial relief to the public, the Government consider temporarily reducing to 0%, for an initial 12-month period, the duty charged to recognised Fuel Importers on importation of (1) Fuels Purchased By Utility Providers, (2) Fuels For Cooking Gas, and (3) Automotive Fuels, including Diesel.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Government obtain a commitment from these Fuel Importers to pass on the savings to their customers.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Government consider reintroducing an Electricity Relief Programme, similar to the one introduced in summer 2023, to reduce electricity costs for families and small businesses during the sweltering summer months.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder?

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Elected Member for George Town South: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you. The Motion has been duly moved and seconded. Does the Honourable Leader of the Opposition wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I do.

Before I get into my presentation, Mr. Speaker, I just want to point out that in the Motion itself, when I spoke about the final resolve, which talked about introducing the Electricity Relief Programme, similar to the one introduced in summer 2023; it should be summer 2022. Just a small error there.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to propose—

The Speaker: Mr. Leader.

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

The Speaker: Just so that we do things properly, would you please move a Motion to amend this resolve section in that way? You'll need a seconder.

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

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, can we finish this? Go ahead, I'll get to the Minister's point.

Amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 13 of 2023-2024

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

Mr. Speaker, I propose to move a Motion to amend the final resolve paragraph in my Motion to change "summer of 2023" to "summer of 2022."

The Speaker: The Motion is moved. Could I have a seconder, please?

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the amendment to the Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you. The question is that the Motion just moved by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and seconded by the honourable Member for George Town South. Be amended in the final resolve section by changing the year 2023 to 2022.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The amendment passed.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, you had a point?

Point of Order

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, while doing some research this afternoon, I came across a news article that said that the Honourable Member who is moving the Motion was a shareholder of CUC.

Under “**Personal pecuniary interest**” of 83(1) in the Standing Orders, it says, “**A Member shall not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which that Member has a direct pecuniary interest or speak on any such matter, whether in the House or in any committee, without disclosing the nature of that interest, and shall in no circumstances vote on any such matter.**”

The Speaker: I'll clarify the first point because if the first point doesn't apply, then there's no need for the second. Honourable Leader, can you indicate whether or not you're a shareholder in CUC?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I am a shareholder of CUC.

The Speaker: Fine. Then the second point is, does that have anything at all to do with the Motion or anything that is sought—?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Minister, just please let me finish.

If there's anything to do with what is being sought in the Motion, as far as I can see, this has absolutely nothing to be gained by CUC or any of its shareholders. Government is being asked to give up their fees, not CUC. On that basis, I don't think the Standing Order referred to applies. Honourable Leader.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I will now move on to the substance of my Motion.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to propose this Motion today with a sense of urgency. Despite the recent decline in the headline rate of inflation, the cost of living crisis is still impacting families and businesses across our Islands. The urgency of this Motion is not to be understated. If our people are hurting, then it is the Government's job to offer immediate help and support to ease the pressures on household budgets. If the Government is not doing its job, then it is the obligation of the Opposition to point this out and offer immediate solutions, such as the one being proposed in this Motion today.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion before the House asks the Government to give some financial relief to the public by temporarily reducing to zero per cent, for a twelve-month period, the following duty charged to recognised fuel importers on importation of (1) fuels purchased by utility providers, (2) fuels for cooking gas,

and (3) automotive fuels including diesel. The Motion also seeks for the Government to obtain a commitment from fuel importers—

The Speaker: Honourable Leader. Nothing to do with you, but it just occurred to me that I need to make it clear to the Minister, to the House, and to anyone listening, that the licence between the Cayman Islands Government and Caribbean Utilities Company Limited involves the provision of what's called a flow through or pass-through of all of the cost associated with fuel.

It doesn't matter to CUC whether there's a duty, it doesn't matter how high it is, it doesn't matter whether it exists or not; it doesn't impact their bottom line at all. It's a flow through right to the consumer, so any reduction of the fuel duty goes straight to the bill that each consumer receives. Hence, my conclusion that there's no financial interest whatsoever relating to this, as far as CUC is concerned.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Tourism and Ports, I've already ruled on that matter. If you have another point, please raise it, but I have already ruled on it. I was simply explaining the basis of my ruling.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a point of elucidation.

The Speaker: Is it a point of order, sir?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: What's the point of order?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Quite similar to that of what was raised before, but not to do with CUC—

The Speaker: What is the point of order?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: That section 38(1) as per the Motion— and I'm really not trying to get into a fight with you this late in the evening, but my point—

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, I am more than happy to hear what you have to say, but you've got to direct me to the Standing Order that you are seeking to invoke.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, maybe my voice wasn't loud enough. I did say 83(1), sir.

The Speaker: Read it for me, please?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: The same one that was read before, sir. A Member shall not move a Motion or amend any such Motion—

The Speaker: I've already ruled on that point, as I said.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I'll take one attempt to just bring your attention to it and if you want me to sit down, I'll sit down. When we're speaking solely to—

The Speaker: Minister, I have ruled on that point. I am not going to reopen it. Honourable Leader.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can see where we're going tonight.

[Pause]

The Speaker: You had completed the first paragraph of what you were saying, I believe.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to begin with my second paragraph.

The Motion before the House asks the Government to give some financial relief to the public by temporarily reducing to zero per cent, for a twelve-month period, the following duty charged to recognised fuel importers on importation of:

1. Fuels purchased by utility providers;
2. Fuels for cooking gas; and
3. Automotive fuels, including diesel.

The Motion also seeks for the Government to obtain a commitment from fuel importers to pass on the savings to their customers, but as I will note later in my debate, the Government does already have appropriate levers to ensure that these reductions are passed on to the public.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, given the expected very high temperatures over the summer, we have asked the Government to consider reintroducing an Electricity Relief Programme, as done in the summer of 2022, to further reduce electricity costs for families during the sweltering summer months. I am certain that earnest conversations between the Government and CUC could provide some short-term remedies to help families. Perhaps a temporary delay in the recently agreed electricity rate increases till after the summer could be agreed and would be extremely helpful.

Mr. Speaker, I will note that the Motion, as presented, stated that the Electricity Relief Programme was done in 2023, but I've made that correction and amended the Motion.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, we have regularly advocated for the Government to do more to ease the pressures on households for the past 2.5 years since

inflation began to spiral out of control. Had the then PACT Government, now called the UPM, acted decisively when we first made the case, we would not have to bring this Motion. Alas, that moment for action passed without the necessary action being taken; so here we are today, once again asking on behalf of so many Caymanian families for some relief from the financial pressures they are facing.

Mr. Speaker, let me remind this House how we got here. From the outset, it has only been the pressure Ministers have faced from Members of the Opposition that forced them to face up to the cost of living crisis that has been crippling so many in our country. During the June 2022 parliamentary session, the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) released its regular consumer price index report showing that inflation had reached 11.2 per cent in the first quarter of the year, up from the already worryingly high mark of 7.6 per cent the previous quarter.

Admittedly, this confirmed what we felt as we went about our daily lives— that everything was getting much more expensive, but these figures gave a real substance to what we were all feeling, and made clear the scale of the crisis. Any responsible Government faced with such an inflationary wave would immediately have made a statement to the House setting out the action it proposed to take to deal with the obvious threat this posed to families and businesses.

However, this was not the case with the Government. At least not at first. You will no doubt recall, Mr. Speaker, that in the absence of any such statement from neither the then Premier nor the then Minister of Finance about the crisis, I was allowed to pose an urgent question asking what the Government intended to do about the looming catastrophe for families and businesses that an inflation rate of over 11 per cent represented. You will also recall that it took the then Premier several hours in a meeting room with his colleagues to answer the question, but the answer he eventually gave was inadequate and he came back again early the following morning to give a more fulsome answer.

I will leave aside the obvious fact that it should not have taken the Opposition raising the urgent question for the Government to realise action was desperately needed. Instead, if we look at their response, clearly, the Government did not adequately understand the pain that this sharp spike in inflation was already causing households across our Islands.

As I have done before, Mr. Speaker, I will acknowledge the welcome, short-term assistance with electricity bills that the Government finally implemented. We are, in this Motion, asking that they implement another such programme. It was very successful. I will also acknowledge a small number of other actions that were taken and several of those were suggestions made by the Opposition and supported by us. As I pointed out before, the Government's list of apparent action was too often simply the repackaging of other policies rather than any genuine attempt to make a

difference. Most obviously, the former Premier rushed to claim that the free school meals policy was being implemented to help reduce costs for hard-pressed households. In reality, the policy was announced a year earlier, immediately after the administration took office, and its objectives were stated in terms of improving health and education outcomes rather than having anything to do with inflation and reducing household bills.

By contrast, Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition spent the last two years tirelessly advocating a wide range of measures that would have brought genuine relief to hard-pressed families and businesses. Our dedication and commitment to the people is unwavering and we will continue to fight for some financial relief for them. Even as the inflation rate begins to cool, many of those actions should still be taken now, so I am proposing this Motion here today.

In my budget speech at the end of last year, I said, **“The danger now is that with the inflation rate slowing, the new Government will breathe a sigh of relief and once more take its eyes off the ball.”** Sadly, I think I've been proven right, Mr. Speaker. A new Premier and Minister of Finance and yet nothing really has been done. No action and no relief for hard-pressed families. The need for immediate action is clear, and we cannot afford to wait any longer.

Mr. Speaker, the annual inflation rate has come down from its peak of 12.1 per cent in mid-2022. The ESO's latest report tells us, that the rate for the first quarter of this year was 1.5 per cent overall. While we might still be concerned that there may be further small spikes as we saw at the end of 2023 when the inflation rate rose to 3.6 per cent, the days of runaway inflation have slowed, at least for the immediate future. However, we are still living with the impact of the sharp inflation spike that hit us from mid-2021 to mid-2023.

As we are in hurricane season, I hate to use the analogy, but Mr. Speaker, if a hurricane hits, we all know that the storm does not end when the storm passes, the damage that it has done still needs to be repaired; and so it is with inflation. Even if the peak has passed, we still need to repair the holes torn in household finances. What we see, even though inflation has moderated very significantly, prices are still high. They're not coming down. They will never come down. Please, let's not make any mistakes, Mr. Speaker—many of our people continue to struggle.

The reason for that is that, as we debate this Motion, prices in the Cayman Islands today are at least 20 per cent higher than three years ago when this Government took office. That figure would be frightening enough for most folks, but as we all know, prices have not risen evenly over the last three years. For many families, it has been the costs that impact them the most that have seen the sharpest rises.

Let me look at some figures for the first quarter of this year and compare them with the previous three years, starting with the first quarter of 2021 when the Progressives left office. Let's see how things have

changed on this Government's watch. Most obviously, the category of spending that has seen the sharpest rise has been housing and utilities, where prices have risen by a third or 33 per cent overall.

Only days ago, we had evidence that the cost pressures on families have not gone away: The news that CUC has been given permission to increase its rates by 3.2 per cent, retrospectively from the 1st of June, was greeted with anger and dismay from most of its customers. The average impact of that increase was described by CUC as only an extra \$5 on monthly electricity bills, but Mr. Speaker that will be \$5 a month which many will be struggling to find—a further illustration, if any were needed, of why Government action to bring down monthly bills is so badly needed.

Actual rents paid in Cayman have increased a staggering 33 per cent in just three years. Government's own data tells us that the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is now a shade under \$2,000 per month in Bodden Town and West Bay, while in George Town, a young family needs to find an average of \$2,134 per month for a similar apartment.

Utility bills have also gone up. Prices rose for electricity, but the Government offered some help. We said then that more help was needed and that import duties on various fuels should be temporarily reduced to nil. As the monthly bills have shot up, the cost of daily life is weighing heavy on many Caymanian families.

If you wake up in the morning and fancy scrambled eggs for breakfast, today you will be paying 47 per cent more for those eggs in the grocery store than three years ago. If you have coffee with your breakfast, price has gone up 26 per cent in three years. If, like many Caymanians, you add sugar to that coffee, then you are paying an eye-watering 95 per cent more for that sugar, than when this Government took office. If after breakfast you drive to work, the cost of the gas you use might have fallen a bit from its peak, but it's still 34 per cent higher than three years previously. If you stop on your way home to buy new shoes for your kids, and you all know how quickly kids grow through a pair of shoes, the cost of those shoes will be 39 per cent higher than when this Government took office. I could go on, Mr. Speaker, but I suspect my point is made.

Crucially, we know, that as prices have increased, wages have failed to keep pace. Few Caymanians will take home 20 percent more pay than three years ago to match the overall inflation. I doubt there are many who will have seen a 33 per cent increase in pay necessary just to keep up with rent rises. For most people, wages have remained flat.

The last Labour Force survey, which gave results from last Fall, noted a slight reduction of about 5 percent over the previous three years in the numbers of Caymanians on the lowest wage bands; however, nearly 4,000 working Caymanians receive a monthly wage of less than \$2,400. Some 4,400 more Caymanians receive over \$2,400, but less than \$3,600 per

month. Therefore, some 39 per cent of Caymanians are in jobs where the pay is under \$3,600 per month.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker, so many of them find it difficult and find rents unaffordable. No wonder so many are struggling with the spiralling utility bills. No wonder, so many must go without or, at best, cut back on weekly grocery shopping. As I have described, the reality is massive increases in the prices Caymanians pay every day, every week, and every month for the basics like a roof over their head, food on their table and gas in their tank. The reality is that at the same time, their wages have barely gone up, if at all.

It is no wonder so many Caymanians tell us that they feel worse off. It is no wonder that those families feel disillusioned and forgotten. Those Caymanian families have not been forgotten by the Progressives, Mr. Speaker. We will not abandon them to cope if they can't. That's why, once again, we call on the Government to finally realise the depth of this crisis and take meaningful action. The specific actions we are asking the Government to consider taking in this Motion, would bring much-needed and immediate relief to households and businesses over the next 12 months. We are calling for the Government to consider temporarily reducing to zero per cent, the duty charged on imports of fuels purchased by utility providers, fuels for cooking gas and automotive fuels, including diesel. In our view, this is the best mechanism available to the Government to give general relief.

Mr. Speaker, I digress a bit here to mention that within the last month, our fellow overseas territory of Bermuda's utility company, Bermuda Electric Company, was awarded an increase in their rates, and found themselves being criticised and the people crying out against the increases. The Government acted immediately. They turned around and they instituted a similar programme like what I'm asking for tonight: reducing the rate on the duties that are imposed on fuel consumed by the electric company. They reduced it from 20 per cent to 8 per cent. The estimated cost to them as a result of doing that is some \$10 million, but others are looking and doing that, and giving their people relief.

It is also the mechanism where the Government can best be assured that the relief offered will find its way through to customers. The fuel duty surcharge reduction would be seen on the face of monthly CUC bills. Consistent with what you were sharing with us earlier, Mr. Speaker, it is simply a flow through; what they pay, they pass it on to the consumer. The reduction in prices at the pump could be monitored by OfReg [Utility Regulation and Competition Office] as part of their efforts to ensure the competitiveness of the sector and the same applies to the cooking fuels.

We believe the change could be implemented immediately. In 2022 it was implemented quite quickly. We propose that it should last a year, at which point it would be fitting to take stock and to see if the duty reduction should be renewed, and if so, on what terms.

By then a new Government will be in office, and I am sure that it will want to take stock of many things. This duty reduction can be one of many things it will want to consider.

Before I go on, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will allow me a short digression. I recognise and realise that the measures I am proposing today offer universal benefit. I think the scale of the crisis warrants such a response. Mr. Speaker, to avoid doubt, I must mention that the Progressives continue to argue for targeted measures in addition to those set out in the Motion.

First, we recognise that the national minimum wage needs to be increased. Of course, we introduced the first national minimum wage and we started the review process while in office. The PACT Government committed to the completion of that review in its first Strategic Policy Statement some three years ago. In my response to the SPS, I urged the then Premier to complete the work we had started, but that had been held up during the pandemic. Despite my urgings, the Minimum Wage Committee's work was not started until early last year, and their final report made it to the Minister's desk around September/October.

You will be aware, Mr. Speaker that we Tabled a parliamentary question to the Minister about progress on the minimum wage and that question was answered by the Minister. We Tabled the question on behalf of the thousands whose livelihoods depend on the answer. I must say I was disappointed with the Minister's answer to my question, for it indicated to me that after all this time, we are really no further ahead in delivering an updated minimum wage for the Islands. Mr. Speaker, my view is—

The Speaker: Honourable Leader, I wouldn't spend too much time on the minimum wage. It's not covered by the terms of your Motion.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Okay, I'm finishing it up right now, sir.

Mr. Speaker, it was dragged for much too long and we now urge the Minister to complete that review and bring it to a conclusion.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we recognise that the most vulnerable in society are often the worst hit by inflation. We therefore welcome the last Government's response to our campaign for an increase in the stipends paid to retired seamen, veterans and those dependent on financial assistance from \$950 per month, put in place by the Progressives last term, to \$1,250 per month. In response to a Motion brought to the House by yourself, Mr. Speaker, the Minister for Social Development agreed to consider a further increase to \$1,500 for seamen, veterans, pensioners, and those needing long-term financial assistance.

It was also agreed that the public service pensions' ex-gratia uplift payments would be amended so that all Civil Service pensioners would receive a pension of at least that paid to older persons receiving

permanent financial assistance from the Government. While that long-serving pensioner increase finally did happen, Members will have seen a recent announcement that those civil service pensioners will not be seeing their stipends increased, while other public service pensioners are raised, nor has action been taken to move forward with the general stipends uplift to \$1,500, monthly. I have therefore renewed our Progressives campaign for the necessary uplift. Notwithstanding the Premier's response to our parliamentary question yesterday regarding this issue, we will continue to make the case and advocate for the increase to \$1,500 per month for those in need of Government support.

Mr. Speaker, let me pause to acknowledge that some in our society may question such increase, but I ask that they recognise that people today live longer and in far too many cases are outliving what they have saved. Their meagre pensions are insufficient, and so the increased ex-gratia payment dramatically affects the quality of life in their old age.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how Ministers will respond to this Motion, but I do hope that they will find it a positive step and embrace it. If the pattern we have seen in previous Sittings of the House is repeated, the Government may enthusiastically support the Motion, and then do nothing—

The Speaker: Honourable Leader.

You have a point of order, Honourable Minister?

Point of Order

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Yes, Mr. Speaker, just give me two seconds to find the relevant point of order. It's with respect to reading. I believe I've given much leeway, and if the Member is going to read from a particular document, he should provide copies to this honourable House. The Standing Orders speak to particular notes that you can take and refer to, but he's read from the very start to where he is now. He's reading from a document. How do I know—how do the people of this country know, whether somebody prepared that speech for him?

He's not supposed to be reading. Only members of Cabinet are supposed to be reading from statements. If he's going to provide what he has prepared for the honourable House, then so be it. If you give me a second, Mr. Speaker, I can bring up the relevant Standing Order.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, I am more than well aware of the provisions of these Standing Orders—except the one you just invented, which is that only Cabinet Ministers can read.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, please continue.

[Inaudible interjection]

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

Mr. Speaker, I started to say that if the pattern we have seen in previous Sittings of this House is repeated, the Government may enthusiastically support the Motion and then do nothing about implementing it or, at best, make haste very slowly. I hope then, and I do pray, that they won't do that with this Motion.

If, as I hope it will do, the House votes to support the Motion today, then we will have created the expectation that action will be taken. I know Mr. Speaker, that we can only ask the Government to consider action and that we cannot bind the Executive; however, if Government Members vote for a Motion, people should rightfully expect to see positive steps taken to implement it. If a way can be found to make the changes happen during this Sitting, Mr. Speaker, we on this side will support it, but I doubt, given the timing and everything else that has taken place here this week, that it could be achieved. I hope Members on the Government side will be straight. If you don't intend to take action to implement the proposed changes, then please explain why not to the people, tonight.

There can be only two reasons why a Government might fail to implement the change I am asking for and advocating. The first is that they believe it is unnecessary. I have amply demonstrated in the remarks I have already made that the relief this measure will bring is much needed, desperately needed. The second reason the Government might reject the ideas in my Motion is that they might consider them good ideas but unaffordable. Well, let me deal with that potential objection, Mr. Speaker.

I have been among the harshest critics of this Government's wasteful spending; therefore it might be a surprise that I am suggesting a measure that might appear to strain the Government's finances further. One simple way around this problem is for Ministers to call a halt to some of the unnecessary spending and re-evaluate it. Re-evaluate what is going on and use the savings made to finance the measures. By all accounts, there are very significant surpluses in Government's finances that could be used and applied to support these Motions.

This would have the double benefit of bringing much needed relief to households and businesses, while reducing at least some of the spending that this Government has become famous for; however, having failed to persuade Ministers to curb their spending during the budget debate, I suspect that my appeal to them could very well fall on deaf ears now. I hope they do not. I hope tonight I am wrong. I believe that the Government already has more than enough money in its coffers to make the proposed duty reductions affordable. The funding is there.

Mr. Speaker, I have demonstrated in my remarks this evening that the proposed fuel duty reduction is necessary, if we are to do something to support the thousands of families and businesses still struggling to come to terms with the cost of living crisis. I believe that I have clearly demonstrated that the changes I am proposing are affordable for the Government. They can do it. I know they can do it. All it takes is for them to agree to take the request on board and give it due consideration.

I conclude tonight, Mr. Speaker, by urging all Members to support the Motion before the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Ports.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the Honourable Leader of Opposition for bringing the Motion and giving this honourable House the opportunity to discuss ways to reduce the cost of living for Caymanians and all those who live in the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think you will find that arguments on this side will be one of oppose in finding solutions to reduce the high cost that we are dealing with in respect to inflation. As the Honourable Member has highlighted, the Government has done parts of what this Motion outlines already. The fact that the Motion says "consider", I know the Honourable Acting Premier will speak solely on our behalf in respect to the consideration.

I thought it would be prudent to highlight some potential hurdles in the way because we are in the process of doing some considerations ourselves, monitoring our financial position up to the halfway mark of this new budget. I don't want to get into a conflict with the Opposition about this Motion because its intent is to help Caymanians, and we want the same outcome. That requires balancing the income that you have—how you will allocate the money that you have coming in, and what you're going to focus it on. Which brings me to the point of what the Leader of the Opposition said in respect to "unnecessary spending".

Mr. Speaker, naturally, somebody in Opposition would say such terminology as "unnecessary spending", but I would recall that this whole Parliament supported the budget that was passed and all the allocations within that budget were approved by this Parliament. Now, I know the rule of being in Opposition. I know election is around the corner. About saying, well, why don't you take some money from the scholarships to help with this? Or let's take some money away from NGS 55 to take away from healthcare. Let's take away some money from the road allocations. Let's take away some of the money that we're paying the civil servants. Mr. Speaker, quite like what I was exposed to when I was in Opposition. I remember the Leader of the

Opposition being the Minister for Finance, and talking about that balancing act.

It's never an easy one because everybody will say where the priority should be, but let me not stray away from the truth and the importance of what the Member is trying to accomplish, which is to help reduce. I'm confident in saying that the Government will consider ways to do so.

As I was trying to rise earlier, Mr. Speaker, it was not to conflict with you in any way. I recognise the power of this honourable House lies within your hands. Some of the areas I had conflicts and difficulty with are not about CUC. I agree with you wholeheartedly; because the pass-through cost is there, that is a process of audit where we, as a Government, can ensure what's on the bill goes directly to the consumer. We've done that already. I don't think there are any squabbles there, and we would agree to that.

However, we have to assess and quantify what the value of the proposition by the Member is. The truth of the matter is, it's hard to evaluate that outside of the CUC component, which leads me to the other elements of his resolve section and I'll read it one more time, just for detail and clarification. It says, **"BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that to give some financial relief to the public [which I agree with, I think most Members will] the Government consider temporarily reducing to zero per cent, for an initial 12 months, [We can quantify that from CUC's perspective based on the averages and we'll have an idea what that is, and the Honourable Acting Premier will address that shortly] the duties charged to recognised fuel importers on importation of fuel purchases by utility providers [I would think that would cover the CUC component], fuel for cooking gas and automotive fuels, including diesel."**

Mr. Speaker, I had the luxury of being selected by the honourable Chair for the Fuel Review Committee. In the task of trying to figure out ways to resolve the fuel cost—because we know that fuel is a key component of the relevant expenses of the Cayman Islands—one of our biggest challenges is where's the authority in the law to mandate a gas station or cooking gas company by saying, the Government has just reduced 25 cents on that fuel, therefore you have to bring your price down by 25 per cent because, I have yet to find it.

Unlike the agreement with CUC, which we have done before, we know it's practical and can happen. It would be very difficult even for OfReg within its current structure of power, which in my humble opinion needs to be reformed so it has more strength and more teeth, but that goes into the power of price control. That's why I'm happy that the Member understands that the Government can consider. There's other factors we need to put together to say whether we can go down this route. Is this the best way to get the relief to our people, which we also want to do?

The Government wants to give relief and we're constantly monitoring— we're at the halfway mark, where is our surplus? Can we afford this? Are we still on our projections? Did we lose in other areas? While we're doing that, the Honourable Premier—unfortunately, she isn't here—has been advising us on our halfway mark and we believe that we will be in a position within short order to make some relevant announcements, but I'll leave that to the Honourable Acting Premier to go into further.

Though the support of this Motion is intended, how do you audit its other components to ensure that when Government gives up those taxes and fees that we collect on their behalf, it's passed down to them when you go to the gas station? For example, you're buying one gallon of gas and we don't charge the gas station for the duties associated per gallon. I'm not sure how much that is, but hypothetically speaking, let's just say it is 15 cents. Without price control legislation or regulation, how do we tell the gas station— and I'm open to the Member highlighting what section of the fuel regulation or legislation tells OfReg that they can price control for us— *"We're watching you. We gave you 15 cents off, therefore your price has to go down by 15 cents in order to pass it on."*

We know the pass on will occur with CUC, but I don't see where... and this is why we will have to go away and consider these factors, as per the law; but off the top of my head, I don't see how we can do it with sections 2 and 3. That does not mean that we cannot support the Opposition's intention with this Motion which I am happy to say, on behalf of the Government, is already in consideration; but of course, we know Mr. Speaker, let's be real, there is an election in a few months. This is that election-time discussion.

They know, just like us, this is the first half of the budget, the first half of the year whereby most of our finances come in through financial services and tourism and we have to watch these slow months. They're strategic, they know this. They've been here before, so they will go, *"Let's do it now before the Government takes action themselves and puts in an incentive programme"* because, Mr. Speaker, the truth is we have a track record of doing that ourselves— they mentioned it themselves in the Motion. What I would ask, is that when we get to the conclusion of this Motion the Opposition recognises that we already have intentions, but it's not only in the way that they suggested.

Mr. Speaker, we know what will happen. There will be a statement sent out by video with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition saying "the Opposition got the Government to reduce this and reduce that"; meanwhile, because we haven't said it yet, nobody talks about the fact that we're working behind the scenes watching the money. Making sure that we can still pay the civil servants; making sure that we can still send our children off to school on scholarships; making sure that HSA can have enough money to give medical care; and making sure [there's money for] our seniors' pension—

they still want to add money (from \$1,250 to \$1,500). We have to balance that consideration. While we still have to consider those [other] things and ensure that we prance at the right time, they get to say, *look, we are the cause of it*. There's a higher level of responsibility on this side.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was over there and you would look at me and say, *"Yeah, we've got many more things to balance."* I understand it today, but I understand the politics. The good thing is that they admitted it themselves, that we've done this before. Give us the time at the three quarter mark of the year where we can have a better understanding of our finances, because we're monitoring that. That's why we have the Financial Secretary. Ask them; they just got the halfway mark on where we are at. We intend to do that!

If you want to take the glory for it, go for it. When we announce it, you can get up and tell everybody you're the one that decided, but let the people know the truth today: that we are already in consideration; we have a formula that we've used before, but we can't do every single thing. That's the point that I'm trying to make. Now that doesn't sound good because everybody wants to have an answer, but we will assess the finances. We will consider whether these particular options are best, but there are other ways to help directly.

Mr. Speaker, here's how I look at this. The comment that I know members of the Opposition have heard before, is *"You're giving away fuel duties to CUC which all the non-Caymanians are taking advantage of, too."* The truth is, if it was up to me, I think it may be better to call the Caymanians directly and say to each one of them, *"See a couple hundred here"*, because the population is less than 50 per cent Caymanian now, but the benefit that we gave before, which amounted to over \$7 million if my memory serves me, was split. It means \$3.5 million went to non-Caymanians. Let's put [permanent] residents in there, too, to make it fair, because they're on their path to becoming Caymanian.

However, the people on a work permit— are we supposed to be giving them benefits? I don't think so because the truth is, in my humble opinion, if you came here on work permit and you can't live off of the salary that you accepted, it means you shouldn't have come. That's my opinion, so we have to ensure we make the right assessment, at the right time, to make ensure that benefit gets directly to *Caymanians* and those who are permanent residents. That's my opinion.

We have to make that call collectively, and as I said, the Premier will speak further on that, but I want the Member to try to not... He's going to do it anyway. It's politics time. Eight months away from an election, it is campaign time. Granted, I cannot say that he's not right to try to do what he has to do to get it down, but while he's saying, *"Oh, we are trying to do this,"* the Government is trying to do it, too.

You see, if we were frivolous and just giving—Mr. Speaker, bear with me for a minute. I remember when we gave out the bonus and the relief to the seniors during Christmas. You know what they said? Irresponsible spending. Matter of fact, it's probably the "unnecessary spending" that he spoke about before; so, you're damned if you do, damned if you don't. If we give it out, they're going to say we're vote-buying right before election.

I'm talking about this because it's relevant to the Motion, but also so the public can hear, Mr. Speaker. I *know* what it means to bring a Motion from Opposition at this time. If we pass it, "*Oh, we got them to do it.*" If we don't pass it, "*They don't care.*" The truth is, the Government is already considering it. If the Opposition is willing to be patient and see what the Government does, they will see that we will have programmes coming when we can better assess the full year surpluses or, at the very least, the third quarter when we have more confidence that all things are paid for.

They also spoke about making sure that we are compliant with the FFR [Framework for Financial Responsibility], and how our budget lines are so close yet, those same people who would claim that we're irresponsible with our budget allocations and how close we are to being compliant, are the same ones that in the next breath say, "*Increase this, increase that! Give away this, give away that!*" What I would like to hear about, is the unnecessary spending he's talking about. Outline which of the programmes that we are currently doing for the good people of this country would the Leader of the Opposition want to take away. Which one?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to take away from the merit of this Motion, but I'm not going to make politics overtake the truth of what will happen, which is that the Government will come up with something to give back to the people once we have a better assessment of the finances. I'm not going to make them play that game. I've been there, I know what it is about so I'm asking him, which one?

Does he want to stop the scholarships for the \$17 million that we've calculated so far, just for CUC, that he's asking for? Are we going to take it from the seamen? Are we going to take it from the East-West [Arterial]? Are we going to take it from the schools' food programme? Are we going to take it from housing? Are we going to take it away from NAU [Needs Assessment Unit]? Are we going to take it away from health care? Where are we going to take it from, because we're not going to play this political game with the people's minds.

We don't have an endless pot. Yes, the people are in need and we want to give more and we will, but as the former Minister of Finance, he knows how this works. He knows when our revenues come in and their timelines. I refuse to allow you to fool the people of this

country with the politics of it because you know we want to give them relief, too.

Yes, we have some surpluses and yes, we will continue to assess—and Mr. Speaker, I want to try to educate the House tonight about surpluses and the tricks to surpluses. Here's why: Any business owner out there would understand this quite clearly, depending on what kind of business they are in. You can have a surplus in the first six months, but by the tenth month of the year you might actually be in a deficit, because most of your sales, depending on what industry you're in, may come in at a particular time.

Now, we do not think that we're going to have any deficit. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that we are held to the responsibility to ensure that for this full year we make the mark to pay all the bills. Meaning all of the civil servants, all of the people who are retired, all of the children who are in school, all of those who are sick, all those who are on NAU, and all of the authorities, everybody can get paid. That's what we are responsible to do. Naturally, Mr. Speaker, in three years [here] now, four years over there, I've seen a trend and I learned it, which is, you don't do any heavy spending until around the eighth or ninth month because you have better predictability on what your revenues are going to be, and I'll tell you why. I'm going to add a bit more information for the audience to understand.

Our two main industries, financial services and tourism. Those in tourism, like the former Minister, know that we're going into the slow season, aren't we? The revenues from tourism taxes and fees are going to start to slow down. That surplus we had in the first six months is to make up for those slow months. We make projections for those slow months before financial services and tourism start to pick back up again in the last quarter. In the last quarter, then we can say we covered the slow months, we made the projections, we made it past that line. All the projections for the next three to four months look good, and we've still got a little surplus. Let's make that initiative that we wanted to do, because we are now more in the safe zone.

The other part which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did not highlight, is that we are in hurricane season. Hypothetically speaking, the proposal that the Honourable Member is suggesting costs \$25 million. God forbid—knock on wood. Heavenly Father hear my voice tonight, I only say this as an example—we have a hurricane. Where are we going to get the revenue from to help the people who need to get recovery? Those are the different things that we have to consider on this side; but no, they're going to say, "*Oh, the Government don't care about you.*" Of course we care!

Listen to me, I wish I could give every Caymanian a million dollars tonight—but you see what they want us to do, what they want to say is, "*See, the little newbies, the new ones over here, they don't know how to handle the money.*" They want us to go ahead. They say fall for the \$1,500 trap. Fall for the CUC giveaway

trap. Fall for this trap. They pressure us—and I like the move, you know. I know Opposition, and I like the move. Ask, ask, and ask for plenty, but accuse them of not being responsible. How can you do two things in one voice? Come on. Especially knowing, having come from it.

Yes, we're young. Yes, we are new, but thankfully, legends like the Honourable Premier and the former Speaker of the House, Mr. Bush, give us a little guidance—and the good civil servants. The Financial Secretary who has been there guiding the last Government, the Government before that and the Government before that, on how to manage our finances. Every one of us here on the Government side, are saying, *"Give me some more, I need help."*

You don't think we go to the Financial Secretary and say, *"Can we afford anything?"* You don't think that we go to the technocrats who have advised the same Government that is asking us now? We went to the same one that you went to and he's telling us the same thing: *"Listen, take your time. We're gonna do it, things are looking good. Just take your time, you will be able to deliver"*; and I remember you said the same thing when I was over there, so let's not play the politics game. I know the election is around the corner, but I won't allow you to do that to the listening audience. I know the videos will come, but do not try to fool the people.

I tell you what, if the Government can't deliver something before Christmas starts to come, then you have a right because by then you all know that we have passed the slow period, the hurricane period is done and all our revenue markers would have been made. If we are still in the financial position and we haven't done anything, then I will give you credit. I would say to you, hold me accountable; but do not try to trick the people when you know how this financial model of this business called Cayman works, because you've been in the seat before!

This Government will help the people. We will have something to give back to the people, but you don't play politics with it. If you understand what I'm trying to do, Leader of Opposition, I'm pre-empting your strike, because I know the strike that is coming after this regardless of whether we support it or don't. This is a political move, and I don't think our people should fall for it.

Trust me, Mr. Speaker, I feel my people's pain. You heard me in my last debate talking about housing. You know who they come to when they need help with CUC? I'm sick and tired of seeing CUC vouchers. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I'll show you for evidence purposes, because the country needs to see it.

See ya. This is what we have to do as Members. See ya. Food cards, out of our own salaries. Thank God, some good donors help us sometimes. We know! We feel it! Every one of us Members has talked about, *"Boy, you got any food cards you can help me with this week? I'll give it back to you when I buy my*

batch." We help our people, but it's the taxpayers' money. It's everybody's money. We can't just be loose, loose, loose, loose with it. When we are loose with it, then the first persons who want to hold us accountable is the same Opposition who is throwing out, give, give, give, give, give. They'll accuse us by saying, *"See? They couldn't manage the country. Two billion dollars and they lose it."* I know that line and I'm not falling for it. You can say you didn't like my policies, but you're not going to say that we ruined the country. You're not gonna get that.

We understand the feeling. We help our people. We spend thousands of dollars out of our own money—matter of fact, half of us over here are in debt.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Acting Deputy Premier: Right?

Let me rephrase what I mean by 'debt'. I want to make sure that we don't mislead anybody. Most of us are worse off from a financial perspective, being in Government than before, because the disposable income that we used to get, all goes back out to the people. Rightfully so! I feel good when I can help my people. Matter of fact, I've got a couple of calls I need to respond to tonight after Parliament to help. CUC's date passed, you know? We know how it goes. It's not that we don't want to do it, but we have a responsibility. When the big corporations call us up and say, *"How are you running that company called the Cayman Islands? Are you a bit irresponsible? Your debt-service ratios are not being met."*

Mr. Speaker, I can go on and on, because you know me, I like to put it down. God knows which clip they're going to use to try to sell a different picture than what I said, but let me make this clear. We are going to help our people. We want to help our people. We have to do it in a managed way. The most conservative person I've seen in politics yet, is the current Acting Premier. I've seen him fight to get more help for NAU because people need it.

I can promise you this, when the time comes from the financial services and tourism benefits, that we see that we can strike, trust me, this Government is going to give. You don't think we want to get elected too, *or wha'*? We want to get elected too. I know your politics' game; but we have to do it when we are certain that we've made profits and we can afford to give back. The people need it back. They're going through hard times.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition, and I support him in his continued effort to try to reduce the cost of living for the people, but I beg him, I beg him, to not play politics when he knows the truth. You know what this reminds me of, Mr. Speaker? This reminds me of sitting with—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan Acting Deputy Premeir: No, it doesn't remind me of Opposition. It reminds me of sitting with the Leader of the Opposition and the former Minister of Tourism in that committee room over there. I said, *"Sir, don't worry about the Barbados flight. We've got a revenue guarantee. We're going to make profits."* You know what he did? Six months later, he sent out a video about how much money we were losing; so much so, that the people in Barbados cancelled the flight! That's what they did.

Meanwhile, we were making profits every month, guaranteed, no matter if zero people went on the flight! All because of politics, and I am not going to make them do it again with this. They knew better, because both of them sat with me, my Chief Officer and a senior member of Cayman Airways. We told them, because I couldn't do it on the Floor of the House due to the contractual agreement, *"Listen, and don't worry guys. I set up a good deal for Cayman! They can fly and we would never lose."* Still, they played politics with it.

That's the part of politics I don't like. Now we no longer have the service to Barbados. You know why? The poor leaders in Barbados were getting so many licks because they basically guaranteed Cayman Airways profits, *'til the man pull out*. That's what politics does—and I'm tired of it, Mr. Speaker. They shouldn't play politics with this, because this Government cares and I can promise you before the end of this year, you will see that we're going to give back to the people.

Mr. Speaker, that's my contribution. God bless you and good night.

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] Honourable Member for George Town South.

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
 Well, well, I think the campaign has started.

The Speaker: Oh, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: I love you, too, but holy moly.

Mr. Speaker, as its seconder, I rise to speak very briefly on this Private Member's Motion. In his opening remarks when proposing the Motion, the Leader of the Opposition very capably outlined why this Motion is so necessary to ease the cost of living pressures on Caymanians and residents. He clearly established that, should the Government, at long last, wish to prioritise action to ease the hardship being experienced on our Islands, that measure is very much affordable.

In demonstrating the need for action, Mr. Speaker, the Leader focused on the big picture. He drew upon the facts and figures produced by the

Government itself to show that the cost of living has spiralled while this Government has been in office. He also made the case that inflation has been felt most acutely by those most in need, and I would like to echo his remarks about the need for Government to provide extra support for the most vulnerable in our community. Most of you will know how much I care about our most vulnerable, particularly our seniors.

I fully endorsed his calls for the necessary upgrading of the national minimum wage; and for the increase in stipends to seafarers, veterans, Civil Service pensioners and others in need, to the \$1,500 per month. Mr. Speaker, you're well aware that the Progressives have been lobbying heavily over both of those issues in recent months. Our campaigning on behalf of those in need across these Islands, will continue as long as it is necessary, to push this Government into action.

The Leader of the Opposition produced a dazzling array of statistical evidence to support the proposals set out in his Motion. However, while one cannot but agree with the case he made, for me the real impact of inflation is found not in the pages of the weighty reports produced by the Economics and Statistics Office, but in the real, lived experience of my constituents. I am sure that I am not alone amongst Members of Parliament here today, in having received countless calls from our constituents over the last two years or more, seeking help and support in the face of hardship. We all know the impact that rocketing monthly bills for utilities, groceries, and other everyday essentials has had on the people we were elected to serve. It is with those people very much in mind that I now second this Motion.

Mr. Speaker, I know of constituents who are trying to help themselves by renting out rooms in their homes just to try to make ends meet to avoid having to go to NAU. Our Caymanian people are very proud, and the last thing they want, is to depend on handouts if they can help themselves. My colleague, the Leader of the Opposition made particular reference to the crippling increases in rent that have occurred on this Government's watch. He talked about average rent increases of 33 per cent over the last three years. Let me just pause here, Mr. Speaker, because that is a truly staggering figure. Average rents up by one third in just three years. Of course, averages are just that; many will have seen rent increases well above that figure of 33 per cent.

Like most Members of Parliament here, I am aware of properties in my constituency for which rent rises of well over 50 per cent have occurred in that three-year period. What is the impact of that, Mr. Speaker? Like many Members of Parliament, I know of far too many examples of young couples still living at home with their parents when they would have liked to be setting up a home for themselves. In the past, we often heard that it was rising house prices that prevented young Caymanian families from getting on the

housing ladder. Now, many young families cannot even afford the rent being asked by landlords and are having to remain at home for far longer than was the case in previous generations.

In some cases, over the last three years, we have even seen young people who had moved out of the family home and into rented accommodation, but have been forced to move back home with their parents as landlords have increased rents. For those who are scraping together enough money to continue to rent, the monthly bills they face means that they are unable to save. In turn, that means they are struggling to put together enough savings for a deposit, should they wish to buy a home; meanwhile, rising prices mean that the amount needed for a deposit is getting higher and higher. At the same time, the recent rises in mortgage rates are making home ownership even less affordable for such young families. For many of them, the dream of home ownership is not one which they see themselves as being able to realise. Instead, home ownership remains an ever distant dream.

The measures outlined in the Leader of the Opposition's Motion before us today will provide some measure of relief to hard-pressed Caymanian families. However, I hope you will indulge me, Mr. Speaker, if I digress slightly to say that one other issue, this government must move on with pace is a need to provide more affordable housing options for Caymanians.

The Progressives have been campaigning throughout the term of this Government's office for action to be taken to help achieve more affordable rents. Too often the focus is on measures to support home ownership—and I welcome those; but we also need to look at how rents can be made more affordable. We have proposed a number of ideas that we believe the Government should be considering. They include the establishment of a social landlord, providing affordable rented homes specifically for Caymanians. Even this late into its term of office, I would urge the Government to undertake the work necessary to investigate the most appropriate way of establishing such an organisation.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, from both my remarks and the Leader of the Opposition's contribution, that there is much more this Government needs to do to help alleviate the hardship created by the inflationary spike of the last three years than is contained in this Motion, however, *"We cannot let the great be the enemy of the good."* The measures set out in this Motion would bring immediate relief to households, and indeed, to businesses across our Islands. There can be no doubt this is an essential support at a time when many are facing genuine hardship and, as the Leader of the Opposition made clear in his remarks, that hardship will continue for some time, even as inflation rate is brought down to levels at which prices themselves are no longer skyrocketing.

Our people look to this Parliament and they look to us, as Members of Parliament, to take the action

necessary to promote and defend their interest. Far too long they have seen a Government which is out of touch with their lived experience. A Government that seems not to grasp the hardship that the recent inflationary spiral has created. As the Leader of the Opposition observed, it has only been pressure from the Opposition that has forced the Government to take any action at all to combat the impact of inflation.

Rest assured, Mr. Speaker that we will continue to press the Government to do more. This Motion and its proposals for immediate financial support to households and businesses is but another step in our campaign. It is finally time for this Government to act, and I urge all Members of Parliament to support this Motion before us today.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] The Honourable Acting Premier.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Leader of the Opposition for the Motion.

To put the proposal into financial context, I wish to outline a few notes I received from the Ministry of Finance team. To recap, the reduction to zero per cent duty, for an initial 12-month period, on imports of fuel by recognised fuel importers that encompass utility providers, fuel imports for cooking gas and imports of automated fuels, including diesel, would result in foregoing revenue of approximately \$17 million over a 12-month period.

Mr. Speaker, as the rest of us in this House, I believe the Mover of the Motion and the seconder have good intentions. We all want to help our people, as fiercely mentioned by the Minister for Tourism, but at the same time, I think the Minister's point is that we have to do so in a manner that's financially sound.

In his presentation, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned two reasons why the Government may have to be cautious about it and one of them is affordability. At this stage, the government is not able to identify areas of expenditure that could be curtailed or eliminated, that will amount to \$17 million annually. According to the Ministry of Finance team, the \$17 million loss of government revenue could be mitigated purely by removing, for example, financial assistance—which is one of the things being asked for. We're unable to do so because we need to keep that programme going.

To touch on it for the record, since the Leader of the Opposition opened the can of worms, the \$950 to \$1,250 increase was not brought about as an idea to respond to the Opposition. From the beginning of the term, we in the Ministry had recognised that \$950 was too low. It was obvious from looking at the Needs Assessment Unit's data that it was difficult for those who received what was then \$950, namely, seafarers and

veterans, older persons and persons with permanent disabilities.

Of course, at the same time we had to recognise the budget constraints and work with the then Minister of Finance to ensure that we could get the uplift. I remember the Ministry staff saying to me, *"We've known that \$950 is too low, it's only a matter of time before the Opposition points it out. Minister, we understand it will make you look as if you're just responding to their proposal, but in Government these are the vagaries of when you can time your increases."* In my mind, that was irrelevant. The major point wasn't who scored the goal, but that people got the help.

As I mentioned in the answer to a PQ, the proposed increase from \$1,250 to \$1,500 is just not justified at the time, because the majority of the persons in that category are already homeowners, so they don't have the largest expense of rent—and the programme is indefinite. In addition, as I also mentioned in that PQ, there is a good portion of that category of persons who get the seafarers/veterans' ex-gratia payment as well as the long-term financial assistance, so they're getting two \$1,250 payments per month. Additionally, persons who only get \$1,250 can still apply to NAU for additional services if they can't meet their basic expenses. That is something that we will continue to monitor and, if costs rise and we can justify it, we'll move to it, but [based] on the data looking at the financial assessments of those households, they're meeting their basic expenses.

What you may get, and I get it too, as an MP, is what we would consider the more incidental or elective expenses which are beyond NAU's remit because their remit is to cover the basic living expenses. Some folks will legitimately ask for incidentals, and I can understand that, but we have to stretch the budget as much as possible to make sure that the basic living standards are covered.

That's just one example. By accepting the Motion and if we were to follow through on the proposal, we might have to cut areas which are already directly impacting people. With the proposal, you still have to rely on part of it to get passed on to the consumer, whereas some of the measures that are already being distributed have a direct impact in their lives now.

The Ministry of Finance team also noted that in addition to the 12-month removal of duty on fuel, the Motion, as stated, considers reintroducing the electricity relief programme. The electricity relief programme which ran from July 2022 to December 2022 provided some relief to families and small businesses with respect to electricity costs that they faced, and the cost to government was approximately \$7.9 million—the introduction of a similar programme in 2024, would cost the Government approximately \$8.6 million. Mr. Speaker, the Government is aware of the significant cost pressures affecting our people and at the moment we're considering active measures to alleviate our citizens' financial burdens but again, as the Minister for Tourism suggested, we have to look at it in a responsible way.

What does that mean in terms of next steps, Mr. Speaker? The Ministry of Finance is going to use the half year results, as at 30 June of this year, with the assistance of chief officers and chief financial officers across Government's twenty-one ministries, portfolios and offices to project, as much as possible, Government's financial results for six months. Once we have that analysis, which should be completed in the next few weeks, we can decide the ways in which we can best help our people. Not only to consider these proposals, but consider them against other proposals and see which ones would have the most direct impact and that are affordable. That discussion has already happened at Caucus level to think about additional expenditures in respect of items that are already listed as part of the Government's 2024 budget which might just need an additional boost.

In conclusion, I would just say that we all want to help our people. We all want to consider the proposals and they will be considered. That's not being said just so that we can walk out of here and say we considered it, but we're not going to do it—but there is a real world. As the Minister outlined, there are other expenses we have to balance to be able to help our people and still keep the good ship Cayman in good financial order.

I hope that will give the Member some comfort that it will be considered, but it's heavily qualified for the factors that I mentioned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* The Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give a very short contribution to the Private Member's Motion on temporarily reducing to zero, the duty charged by Government on imports of (1) fuels purchased by utility providers, (2) fuels for cooking gas, and (3) automotive fuels, including diesel. I had not intended to speak as the evening is getting late and we know from past experience, in particular with these Private Members' Motions from the Opposition, that we get into the evening, everyone loses interest or we get upset with each other, whatever the case may be.

I listened to the Honourable Minister of Tourism and I must remind him of what we heard all the time in the years that he was in Opposition—*"Unna better remember that this is called the House of Parliament."* This is politics, and it is our job as Opposition. One thing you cannot say is that we have not been consistent in the calls we have made when given the opportunity to come back here—and that's another thing.

You talked about our videos. Yeah, we do our videos, you know why? Well, other people own the majority of the press in the country—if you can call it press—so we don't get any coverage there; and we don't get to Parliament, and the last time we were here we didn't even get to Thursday, so we have to do videos. We have to put our message out there, because people are coming to us demanding that we do. People from across the island are pounding down our doors on Monday and Tuesday while you're in Cabinet and Caucus, pounding on our doors for help.

You have very busy schedules, I know that. I used to be able to do one afternoon for my constituents and visits on Saturdays; I know you're busy, but I'm telling you in this seat, especially when we're not in Parliament, we're getting it outside our door five days a week and on Saturday when we go visiting. People are hurting, Mr. Speaker. There's no way to beat around that. People are hurting.

Don't accept the whole Motion. Punch holes in it. I agree. You're the Government. You know what's happening in your Government, you know where you are financially, and you have the expertise on your side to give you the data. Punch holes in it, but let's do something to help our people. Let's give them some hope—and with all due respect, Mr. Acting Premier, don't say that we're going to have to cut social services.

ISWMS is gone, got a couple of dollars we can use there; Subsea cable is gone, you got \$16 million you can use there—or it might be left, that might be gone already, too. The waterfront experience... my good friend, you've got eight months. You're not going to get it done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: You've got eight months. What are you going to get done in eight months?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No, I'm talking about priorities, Honourable Minister. That is the word we need to focus on. Whether we're talking about ISWMS or Poinciana, we're talking about helping our people make it through this very difficult summer. We have to focus on priorities.

Waterfront parks and buying land, you know what you will use them for? For people to go sleep in their car in them. People going to sleep in tents. You're going to spend more money keeping bathrooms clean, than what you would spend helping your people who need it right now.

Mr. Speaker, I feel my legs and my voice shaking so I'm going to sit; but I say to the Government: Help the people. Help our people, they need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] The Honourable Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first to say that politically speaking I have no dog in this fight.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Politically speaking; however, Mr. Speaker, I do represent Caymanians, and at a minimum, I think it will be a disservice to the people who sent me here if my voice was not heard on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Finance Committee, I said that many of the challenges we have in this country are structural. I can probably say that no Government inherited the best of circumstances, but we made do with what we had, as best as we could, with the information that we had, and hindsight is always 20/20. I listened to the Member for George Town South and enjoyed her contribution so much, that I actually looked at some numbers when she touched on the rent issue and she is correct, Mr. Speaker, so I want to put something in context. This is why my parliamentary bag is always fat—because I keep many books and so forth in it that I can draw information from.

Looking at the 1999 census, Mr. Speaker, we had a population of 40,786 and we had 14,907 homes; by 2010, the population increased by 14,250 to 55,036, while the number of homes went to 22,760—so, between the 1999 and 2010 census, Mr. Speaker, the total population increased by 14,250 and the number of homes we built increased by 7,853. According to the census, by 2021, the population was 71,105 and the number of dwellings was 29,699, so the population increased by 16,069 while [homes] only increased by 6,939. Almost 1,000 homes less than previous censuses.

When you factor in the AirBnB market that has come forth during this time, Mr. Speaker, it also reduces the number of dwellings available for locals. I don't need to explain to Members of this House and the listening public, the market mechanism of demand and supply. As supply goes down and demand goes up, price goes up.

Mr. Speaker, I started my own review of the Government's 2023 Supplementary Plan and Estimates that was presented in this Parliament earlier this week. There were several numbers that jumped out of me, but in particular, I want to touch on four just briefly.

The first one is 'Gasoline Diesel Duty'. The original budget was \$12.28 million and the actual came in at \$15.06 million. In short, the Government duty on fuel was better than what was originally budgeted.

Then I turned to 'Motor Vehicle Duty'. The Government at the time budgeted \$26.77 million and the actual was \$21.8 million. In short, the amount of money that Government expected to make on vehicle duty was less than what was budgeted.

I also want to touch on 'Tourism Accommodation Charges' [SIC]. The original budget was \$25.57 million and the actual amount was \$42.55 million. In short, tourism accommodation tax came in well above what was budgeted.

The last thing I want to touch on, Mr. Speaker, is the most important one. For 'Other Import Duty', which is the bulk of what the Government carries, the Government budgeted \$180 million but only made \$170 million, so \$10 million short.

The reason I touch on those numbers, Mr. Speaker, is to recognise that we have a consumption-based society. If the tourism accommodation tax came in much higher... Well, I know we had more visitors on island than we had originally budgeted. The numbers came in better than what we used to drive the budget. It was a combination of increased visitors and increased room rates, but the numbers were better than what we used as the estimate. I was Minister of Finance then, so I can tell you what were the actual and the assumptions behind them.

It basically means that tourism performed better than we expected, but if tourism performed better than we expected in a consumption-based society, yet Government still missed its customs' target, it means consumption was still less, and I'd hazard to guess that the consumption that was "less" was on the domestic side because if you think about it, custom's duty is normally driven by both domestic and visitor consumption. I don't think the visitor consumption [is at fault] because if we look at alcohol et cetera, which are also a visitor component, it's not that far off from what it was that we expected.

Then you look at what we spend on gasoline, at the duty on that; that's domestic consumption. If people are spending more on their light bill, it means they're spending less in the supermarket. It means that they're consuming less; the Government is making less, and the numbers show it.

Mr. Speaker, last time we were in Finance Committee—almost a year ago, because I sent part of the video to some of the Members in here reminding them of it—I asked the then Minister of Finance what point does the rate go to, in terms of the fuel factor, before we say we're going to re-introduce the programme? If they want, I can send the video to the others whom I haven't sent it to. When I brought the original Motion to set up the fuel review committee, which the Government accepted, these were the things we saw coming and it is no surprise, because I said it then and I'll say it now, we're going to be in for a rough ride for the summer and we need to start getting the fuel under control.

I understand the challenges that the Government faces, because if you look at last year's surplus in central Government, it was just above \$30 million. You put in something that costs \$17 million, and you're down to about \$13 million in surplus. September's hurricane season hasn't hit us yet. We'd be sailing really close to the wind, looking at the constraints of the FFR, et cetera.

As I mentioned yesterday, looking at the segregated insurance fund. It started twenty years ago. That fund was supposed to collect 50 per cent of the indigent costs. Back then, indigent health care costs were \$6 million. That fund would give us \$3 million and the Government paid \$3 million. We have all seen the numbers now, it's close to \$80 million, but we're only collecting \$6 million and we have an ageing population, so we have some structural issues and we need to sit down and find creative ways to help our people. You have people talking about how Cayman needs to redistribute its wealth. I've heard it. Take money from whom? To give to whom? When we open these kind of doors, what we do is create bad mind amongst our people that all of a sudden, those who sacrifice and do well must now pay for people.

Listen, we all get the stories. I've seen people living above their means and they are the same ones who show up looking for assistance, you know. You go inside their house and the A/C is on 24-hours a day, but when you speak to them about it, "*Well, I bet you're A/C is on.*" Yeah, my A/C is on in only a third of my house. I don't do my entire house. I cut to within what I can afford and that has always been the Caymanian way.

We have now entered a point where everybody is looking for instant satisfaction, instant gratification. At what point are we going to stop mortgaging the future of this country for the temporary convenience of the present? We have to draw the line somewhere, and I can tell you this fuel problem isn't going away. It's even worse now. Children are out of school for the summer, so those who used to get free lunches, the parents have to now find food for them. All of us in here have seen the increased demand from constituents with the kids being home for the summer. Light bill is up for the summer. It's even hotter in the summer. House insurance is up for the summer.

These are things that we knew for years were coming. This isn't anything new. The question for us now is how can we responsibly help our people? It is very easy for us in here to lay the blame—we should do this, we should do that—but we all recognise that there are constraints. I asked the question then, and I wish to God I'd gotten the support for it a year before. When I asked the question back then, it was a different person as the Premier.

When we set up the fuel issue, I told you the Middle East isn't riding with Biden. They're going to put it on the Americans during the summer months. They're going to remind them because they want the Democrats out. I said that. I look at CUC's annual report and

it said they used 39.5 million gallons of fuel last year. Their fuel factor cost is just under CI\$140 million. If you look at the number of gallons that they burn, it works out to about 9.7-9.8 million, the fuel factor our Government would have collected from CUC, based on the 25 cents flat rate that we charge.

Now, if we do this we are talking about a 7 per cent reduction properly on people's light bill, but we just gave them a 3.25 per cent, and I know OfReg rejected another 3 per cent increase for them. The issue comes back to us sitting down and having a conversation with CUC and other companies. What can we do to help our people at this time? Why should it be the people always giving up something?

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Corporate Cayman needs to play their part also—and Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get into anticipation, but I'm waiting for the next Motion because you all complain about the 9-10 per cent that CUC gets? Wait till you see the return that the banks are getting. Every single person is finding one way or the other to take money from our citizens; and the most that we can do is take the little that Government has and try to give it back to people, but nobody wants to pay their taxes.

Look how many entities out there owe the Government money, and don't want to pay. I know one entity alone that owes the Government over a million dollars and doesn't want to pay. Now, you all know which entity it is too, and it will become public soon. There is a culture where nobody feels like they should pay the Government, but every single thing is something the Government must do. When people come to me and say, *"But the Government needs to do this,"* I say hold on, the Government is the people, tell me why this is the people's problem now? Explain to me how this became the people's problem, because the government is not a separate entity, the Government is the people. [They say], *"I can't do this."* Okay? Why is it the people's problem? Why is it our problem? How did it become our problem?

At some point we need to start saying to people, you need to take responsibility on some things. I've known families who scrape and struggle just to make ends meet and they've got a lot of pride in it; but I can also tell you there are some who honestly have gotten themselves in situations that they need to be more responsible for. Sometimes, some of us in here need to have the hard conversation with people to say, *"Listen, man, get your act together. If you can't afford CUC, turn your A/C off. Turn it off and open your windows."*

People come to me, they want help, and they're driving a brand-new car. I still have the same car I bought from Ivan days—20-years old; the A/C works, the radio works. I'm good.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, no, no, Member for Bodden Town East, it's not. You know what it is? Priorities. I've got three kids who have to get educated first. That's the difference.

Mr. Speaker, I always remember that old Middle Eastern saying that we have now westernised, where the guy said: *"My grandfather walked 10 miles to work; my father walks five miles. I'm driving a Cadillac; my son is driving a Mercedes. My grandson is driving a Ferrari, but my great grandson will be walking again. Why is that? He says, because tough times create tough people, tough people create easy times, easy times create weak people and weak people create tough times."* It takes four generations for us to go from good to bad. Four generations.

The last global reset, Mr. Speaker, was in 1945 at the end of the Second World War. Eighty years, or four generations from that, is 2025. We are now going through that global reset, and other than China, maybe, no country planned for it. Twenty years ago, when China was building cities that were empty, there was nobody living there, everybody was laughing at the Chinese. Why? Because China had a lot of money and they say when Eskimo has money, they buy ice. China knew their population would need homes, so what did they do? They build their homes in advance.

Pretty much every single country outside of China has been caught flat-footed on the housing crisis. Why? Because this is the first time in recorded human history that four generations are working side-by-side, an 18-year-old and an 81-year-old. In yester-years, the grandparent would leave their house to either the child or the grandchild. Now, the grandparent is still alive to live in it. We're literally a whole generation of housing short. These are the kind of challenges that we have.

I recognise that amidst all that, we still need to sit down and find a way to help our people, but at the same time we need to put in place long-term plans, because people are just trying to make it to tomorrow. I've tried my best with the pension, and I thank you all again for unanimously passing it. I alone had eighty-eight people call me to say they paid off their mortgages.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: One lady last week said, *"I don't even have to get house insurance. I can now self-insure."* That's \$14,000 per year she'll save, but it has freed up insurance elsewhere for other people. We have seen all of these costs. We have seen the Government pay an arm and a leg for insurance, too, with all of our buying power.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Leader of Opposition is a good man with good intentions. I have had arguments with him, when he was over there and I was over here. I've argued with him when I was over there and he was over here; and I still argued when we were both

sitting on the same side. Such is the nature of what we do. Politics is still about ideas, ideals and ideology. We will always agree that we want the best of Cayman, but it's still going to come back to the priorities and how best to do it. We're all in the same boat.

I can tell you I was tempted to write to the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Premier, to say *"The last Premier didn't listen to me with regards to putting back the fuel-programme; is it something that you would consider?"*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Hmm? The Member for Newlands, sir.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah; at the same time I didn't, because I was waiting to see what the 2023 numbers would look like. I wanted to see exactly where the final expenses would get to. I can tell you, it is a challenge because when you talk about cutting Government spending, whether it's a capital project or expense project, it is still money going into the local economy. When you take the money out of the economy, there is still someone that hired somebody that depended on that money; or do they now scale back?

Members, I'm always reminded of the story they used to sum up the 2008 financial crisis, where a German tourist went to Greece to vacation: When he arrived in Athens, he decided he was going to go out in the countryside, and while he was there he saw a nice little motel that was really romantic. He had arrived a day before his wife, so he said, *"You know, this is where I met my wife, maybe I should surprise her and, rather than stay in the city, we should stay in the countryside."* He went to the owner of the place and said, *"Listen, my wife is coming tomorrow. I may want to stay here, but I'm not sure yet. I want to see what the town looks like and I may rent a room."*

The owner said, *"Well, leave \$100 on deposit and go look around the place. If you don't like it, then come back and we'll give you back your money."* The minute the tourist went through the door, what did the motel owner do? He ran to the milk man and said, *"Remember that \$100 I owe you? Here it is."*

The milk man ran to the mechanic. *"Remember the \$100 I owe you for fixing my van? Here's the \$100 I owe you."*

The mechanic then ran to his psychiatrist and said, *"You remember I was in problems and you helped me with my mental issues, here's the \$100 I owe you."*

The psychiatrist went back to the hotel owner and said, *"Remember the time my office broke down and you had to give me a room in the motel to help my people? Here's the \$100 I owe you."*

Then the German tourist came back and said, *"Hey, the wife can't make it again. Give me my money."*

He took his money and went. Everybody got paid, but where's the money? The money has gone right back to Germany.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, the story got changed up. That's all right. The story got changed up.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, that's fine. Everybody knows the real story, so that's fine. I've told the real story off mic.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah.

The point that I'm making is that's the circular flow of money. Once you start taking that kind of money out, just yanking it out, you need to look at the other benefits that go with it. That's why even though I had concerns with the Government budget spend, if the money is going domestically, it means there's money going into the economy. It has a multiplier effect.

I am more upset when I see money spent on overseas consultants. That's where the biggest problem is, it's when the money actually leaves the country. I want the money spent here. If it's being spent here, I'm cool with it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Well, that's a different story there.

These are the kinds of things we would have to sit down and wrestle with. Now in terms of immediate relief to people, CUC is one and the banks cannot be left out of this conversation. They cannot be left out.

Since being in Government, I have a lot of sympathy for even the supermarkets. One of the things I learned from the supermarkets when we're talking about—Minister, you might recall—the Government discount store is that there are some supermarkets that have relationships with certain suppliers to give them a certain amount of goods at a set price. The challenge that you run into is you can always find cheaper stuff, but the supply isn't there. Nowhere was that more evident than during COVID.

With many of our suppliers, if it was not for relationships that they had with their suppliers in North America and elsewhere, many of our shelves would have been empty. It comes at a price, a premium to some extent, to make sure that when we walk into the supermarket, the shelves aren't empty. This is what it has come down to. I know one supermarket that said, *"Chris, we can bring some cheaper stuff, but the truth is, we can get it this month, and by next month we can't get it. Once somebody has gotten used to something,*

they expect when they come back to the supermarkets that it'll be there again. We have to deal with people who can give us a certain supply.

Mr. Speaker, this is something I want the Attorney General to look at. Last December, the state of Washington sent checks out to over 400,000 of their citizens for a fine that they got back from the meat companies. I'm doing some research on it, and I want to publicly thank Adolphus, from the Economics and Statistics Office, who was able to send me a spreadsheet with all of the meat prices going back to 2008. Yes, I'm a nerd like that.

Here's where the issue is, Mr. Speaker, of what is happening in the US right now. During the 2008 financial crisis, many companies were having financial problems. Now, when you think about the protein market, it is chicken, beef and pork. If chicken goes up, somebody switches to pork; if pork goes up, they switched to beef. You know what happened in the 2008 crisis? Many companies started having financial problems and the chicken companies started buying all the beef and pork companies. Now, many other states and the federal government are suing them for antitrust because, normally, people have to substitute goods. There was nothing to substitute with. They were all price fixing. More than twenty states and the federal government are suing these companies for basically ripping the American people off.

The reason I decided to start my little side project is that I compared the price of oxtail even back in 2016.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The price of oxtail now is a different story. Just last week I had a millionaire call me and said, "*Chris, I stopped by one particular place, \$14 for a plate of oxtail!*" This is a millionaire. He said, "*Chris, oxtail for \$14?*" This is what it is. The reason why I looked at it is we import everything in this country, and if they are getting ripped off over there, chances are that we are getting ripped off here, too, because we import so much.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we went out and tried to secure that line of credit from the Caribbean Development Bank, to get money to help our people. This is why we talk about the same thing over and over, our people having access to credit and capital; it's to go through the rough times. There are days when interest rates are going to be high, and days they will be low, but we need to have those safety nets and these are the things that we have failed to put in place.

As many interest rates [hikes] the US had, most of their citizens' mortgage rate didn't go up. Why? Because their mortgage isn't tied to the bank rate or the variable rate, it's tied to the bond market. We sit here now with over \$2 billion in mortgages at a variable rate that has gone up significantly, and now you see the numbers. Gasoline duty is up, other duties down; the

same money is in the economy but the people's quality of life is going down. This is why I say that we need to start making structural changes to protect our people, because every time the tide goes one way our people are going to feel it. There are times when interest rates are at their lowest.

Mr. Speaker, the irony about it, if there's one regret that I have from when I was Minister of Finance— I wish I'd used my honeymoon period and pushed that bond through, regardless of who said no. We could have gone out and borrowed a ton of money when interest rates were at its lowest and we did not do it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's all right, relax. No, I'm not going to blame the Opposition, because at the end of the day they are the minority.

It was because of our group's own inaction that we fell down and did a disservice to our people. Interest rates were at their lowest. It could have gone no lower than where it was when we came in. We borrowed money and put some of it on fixed deposit and made money on the money that we borrowed. That's how good it was; but once again, we dropped the ball. Reagan said it best, "*Politics would do well if people don't worry about who'll get the credit*", but this is a business of blame.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Hmm? Oh, this is a business blame, and they say if you can blame the right person at the right time for the right thing, you will get elected or re-elected. This is what it all comes down to. Like I said when I started, I have no dog in this fight because I fought with just about everybody in this House, one way or the other.

I've said this to you before, Mr. Speaker, I have come to appreciate you just as you're leaving politics and I really wish I had a chance to work with you much better. I do realise, in some cases the vision that you had and the challenge that you had; if I had known what I know now, I probably would not have given you so much trouble when I was here the first time.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Equally, I said to you, I wish you had come and explain to us sometimes what the real problem was and take the politics out of it. It is what it is. I will say it to the people of this country, this is an adversarial business and some of you like the excitement, some of you like to fight; but at the end of the day it doesn't get the job done and it doesn't make your life better. What we are charged with here, all 19 of us, is how to make our people's lives better.

The biggest thing that we can do to help and there's one ratio inside—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Colleagues, I'm wrapping up now, but I want you to hear this.

On page 12 of the 2023 Supplementary Plan and Estimates that you the Government Tabled this week. In particular, I want to look at the net debt ratio that says it “**Should be no more than 80 per cent of Core Government revenues**”. Keep that number in mind, 80 per cent. In a nutshell, the budget predicted 27.9 per cent, the actual for 2023 is 4.1 per cent. That is the line in the FFR to help our people. Go and use it. All of this other stuff is cosmetic. Go and use that number, that's what it's there for.

We've always had the FFR. If there's one thing that Cayman prided itself on, even though we've enshrined it in law, we were always a conservative Government. You can go back to any time in our history, we were always conservative. Many of the principles that we had, we were using long before anyone came and told us we should put them into law. That's how we were.

This is the line to help our people. This is the line that goes to the Cayman Islands Development Bank. You go and you get the money, you say to your elders, those over the age of 60 where the loan to value is still low and the interest rates have gone up and they cannot refinance because of their age, I will take your mortgage for you. I will give you a lower monthly payment and you can retire with your dignity.

Don't come back here with another 4.1 per cent of this number when our people are struggling. It's a disservice to the people of this country. For us to get up and talk about, we comply with this, we comply with this, we comply with this, and our people are suffering? The number is there, use it.

We need to look long-term, not these short-term stuff that will actually compromise the FFR. That's the line we need to use. There is enough expertise in this country, in and outside the Government, to find creative ways to use this to make our people's lives better. It will come down to two things: giving them access to capital and access to credit. That's what our people need to get through this.

Thank you all very much.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] If not, then I will invite the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to exercise his right of reply— briefly, I hope.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I will make it brief, Mr. Speaker. I know everyone is tired.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my thanks to the Acting Premier for his very steady and reasoned response to the debate this evening; done without any shouting and no grandstanding, just very reasoned and a steady hand.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, and I thank him, for agreeing to consider the Motion, as it was presented to you all this evening. What I would say is I firmly believe that Government can afford it and I think it's extremely important that the help that can be done, be given sooner rather than later. The last electricity relief programme we did in 2022 started in July. We had it initially for three months, July, August and September, the three months when electricity bills are the highest and the need for any release is the greatest. We are here at the end of July, and there has been nothing said or done about that.

Mr. Speaker, I found it really interesting that the Minister of Tourism jumped up and claimed that they were getting ready to do these programmes themselves, yet still nothing has been heard of from them up to this point. My Motion has been out for over a month, and I know that if they were down the long road on doing a programme like what my Motion asked, I would have been pulled aside. Someone would have said to me, “*Roy, we're considering doing these things. Would you mind withdrawing your Motion?*”, but nothing ever was said to me. Nothing. You've all been silent, but yet all these things are supposedly in train.

Mr. Speaker, we've been on this bandwagon for a long, long time. It's nothing new. What I said today is nothing new to anyone. I've released statements. I've done videos calling on Government to give, and to help our people because we see the issues. We see the problems, as my Deputy Leader here told you all tonight. Man, you wouldn't believe it. From the time I walk into my office to the time I leave in the evening, there's a steady stream of people coming in looking for relief, looking for help.

I've got to be honest with you, those of you sitting on the Government bench, the requests today are not for a \$50 food card. It's not that. They're wanting \$250-\$300 to pay a light bill or pay a water bill. The requests are increasing in frequency, and they are increasing in size. We are only 2 people that can do it. I don't have \$10,000-\$20,000 per month to give away. Neither do you. Neither does my team here. The only way it can be done is through the Government. What I'm asking you all to do, Ministers, is to open your eyes and realise the plight, and I genuinely believe you do.

I'm not going to belabour the wind up here tonight. I think we have aired the issue, and I would hope that we would very quickly hear from you all now and from the Government with regard to what you are intending to do. I accepted the fact you said you would consider it and that you are agreeing to accept the Motion. I'm glad to see you say, yes, sir. I thank you for that, and I look forward to hearing a bit more, not too far from now, as to what Government really will intend

to do. I recognise I came here this evening asking for much, but you ask for much in the hopes that you get something *[Laughter]* and not leave empty handed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to wind up and I wish you all a pleasant evening as well.

The Speaker: The question is: BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that to give some financial relief to the public, the Government consider temporarily reducing to zero per cent, for an initial 12-month period, the duty charged to recognised Fuel Importers on importation of (1) fuels purchased by utility providers, (2) fuels for cooking gas, and (3) Automotive fuels, including diesel.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Government obtain a commitment from these fuel importers to pass on the savings to their customers.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that the Government consider reintroducing an Electricity Relief Programme, similar to the one introduced in summer 2022, to reduce electricity costs for families and small businesses during the sweltering summer months.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 13 of 2023-2024 passed.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, there is still one other Private Member's Motion: Motion on Higher Standard of Bank's Duty of Fairness to Customers. It is a quite complex motion and it is one which frankly proposes some fairly radical things in the Cayman context. One which I believe this Parliament would like to consider carefully, and at 9:30 at night I don't think that it will get the best consideration.

I've spoken to the Honourable Acting Premier and to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and they both agree with me that this is best left for tomorrow, because we will have to return in any event tomorrow to deal with—I've forgotten another item on there.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: We can deal with that tomorrow as well. We will return to deal with the Third Reading of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, and deal with the Motion on the Electoral Boundary Commissions' (EBC) report. I have still outstanding eight government statements, which by my estimation will take an hour and a half or maybe a little bit more than that to deliver. We have to come back in any event.

What the Honourable Acting Premier and I have agreed is that we will put this over to come at the end of Government Business. Since it's just the EBC Motion, which I gather there has been some consensus on, it shouldn't take too long. *[Along with]* the

statements and the Third Reading of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, we should be able to finish that fairly early tomorrow afternoon. I'm most grateful, as I believe will be most Members, to the Honourable Acting Premier and Honourable Leader of the Opposition for agreeing this course so that we can all get home before midnight tonight.

What I do need you to do, Honourable Acting Premier, is to move a motion so that the Order Paper for tomorrow can be reordered so that statements come after the Motion. We'll get the Motion dealt with first and foremost, and indeed, we'll have to do that with respect to the Supplementary Appropriation Bill as well, because those come later usually in the order P. If you will move that Motion, the clerks who prepare the Order Paper can print the paper from tonight and circulate it, so we don't have to wait on that tomorrow morning. I invite you to do that, sir.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that is an accurate summary of our discussion, and I thank the Opposition for their support.

Pursuant to Standing Order 86 I seek to move a motion to reorder the arrangement of business under Standing Order 14 to allow the Government's Motion in relation to the Electoral Boundary Commission report to be heard and dealt with prior to statements by members of the Government—

The Speaker: You may wish to do that with respect to the Supplementary Appropriation Bill as well.

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: —and include also the Third Reading of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Acting Premier. Honourable Members, you've heard the Motion that the Order Paper for tomorrow be re-ordered to allow the Government Motion and the Supplementary Appropriation Bill to come before statements from Ministers and Members. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Motion passed.

The Speaker: The final thing I wish to say with a little humour in my mind is, I gather that equal numbers of Members on the Government bench and the Opposition bench are less than happy with me.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: That tells me that I have actually done a good job in getting the balance right, in keeping this House in order.

Honourable Acting Premier, if you would move the Motion of adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Mr. Speaker, when I was a trainee attorney, a very senior litigation attorney used to say, the sign of a good deal is everybody's grumpy.

[Laughter]

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: On a positive note, I think it is the right call to have ended business now at this hour; especially since we ended on a cordial note, accepting the Motion— we're all trying to help our people.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. André M. Ebanks, Acting Premier: Before we go into another tricky Motion, get grumpy, lose focus, and lose energy for tomorrow, so I think it is the right call to end on a constructive note; with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move a Motion that we adjourn the House until tomorrow morning, at 10 am.

The Speaker: The question is that the House do now adjourn until 10 am tomorrow morning. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

At 9:39 pm the House stood adjourned until 10 am Friday, 26 February, 2024.