



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



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OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Meeting of the 2024/2025 Session
Fourth Sitting

Friday
13 December, 2024
(Pages 1-35)

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

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

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister of Finance & Economic Development, Education, District Administration & Lands, Financial Services & Commerce, <i>and</i> Health
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of Tourism & Ports <i>and</i> Social Development & Innovation
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister of Youth, Sports, & Heritage <i>and</i> Home Affairs
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, CCI, JP, MP	Minister of Border Control, Labour, Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency <i>and</i> Wellness

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. W. McKeever Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West, Parliamentary Secretary to Border Control & Culture <i>and</i> Planning, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport & Development
Mr. Bernie A. Bush, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North, Parliamentary Secretary for Youth, Sports and Heritage

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

INDEPENDENT OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Elected Member for Savannah
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. André M. Ebanks, MP	Elected Member for West Bay South
Mrs. Sabrina T. Turner, MP	Elected Member for Prospect

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SECOND MEETING OF THE 2024/2025 SESSION
FRIDAY
13 DECEMBER, 2024
10.56 A.M.
Fourth Sitting

[Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, Speaker, Presiding]

The Speaker: None.

The Speaker: Good morning. Parliament is resumed. May I invite the Honourable Deputy Speaker to grace us with prayers?

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

PRAYERS

The Speaker: None.

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for Savannah: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to everyone. Let us pray.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

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.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
AND OF REPORTS**

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

**Report of the Standing Business Committee –
First Meeting of the 2024-2025 Session of the
Cayman Islands Parliament**

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Premier.

Let us say The Lord's Prayer together:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament, the Report of the Standing Business Committee for the First Meeting of the 2024-2025 Session of the Cayman Islands Parliament.

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

The Premier, Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is self-explanatory. Just to thank all of the Members for their collaboration and participation.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

The Speaker: Madam Premier, I note the hour. I would be grateful if you would move the customary suspension.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS
OR AFFIRMATIONS**

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the suspension of Standing Order 23 (7) and (8), to allow questions to commence after the hour of 11 a.m.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

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

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

QUESTION NO. 18

UPDATE ON ROAD AND OTHER SAFETY MEASURES PROPOSED TO BE IMPLEMENTED FOR PEDESTRIANS, CYCLISTS AND USERS OF ELECTRIC SCOOTERS

The Speaker: I invite the Honourable Member for Savannah to ask the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development, Question Number 18.

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, question number 18, standing in my name asks of the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development: Can the Honourable Minister provide an update on road and other safety measures proposed to be implemented for pedestrians, cyclists and users of electric scooters?

The Speaker: I recognise the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development, Elected Member for North Side: Mr. Speaker, the National Road Safety Committee, in collaboration which includes the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, the Department of Vehicles and Driver Licence, the National Roads Authority, and the Ministry of PAHI, has been active in pursuit to review and implement measures to enhance the road safety for all.

Key initiatives:

- (1) Licensing and safety standards for electric scooters:

- Establishing proper licensing requirements for electric scooter users;
- Mandating personal protective equipment such as reflective vests, helmets; and
- Adequate lighting on scooters and bicycles to improve visibility to reduce risks

(2) Infrastructure improvements:

- Incorporating proper shoulders and/or bike lanes in all new major road construction projects to provide designated spaces for cyclists and electric scooter use
- Explore options to separate vehicle lanes from pedestrian and rider lanes such as curbs and physical dividers to enhance the safety for all road users.

The Speaker: Supplementaries?

The Honourable Member for Prospect.

Supplementaries

Mrs. Sabrina T. Turner, Elected Member for Prospect: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the Honourable Minister if he can provide any updates with regard to roadworks that have been requested for Orchid Heights—the last e-mail sent was November 19th—and Devon Road, and even cutting back on the back of Raven Avenue. This was requested for some time and we are speaking about safety measures.

I'd also take this opportunity to thank the Honourable Minister for addressing that portion of road in Red Bay, directly in front of the On the Run [gas station] and in the vicinity of the new Popeye's [Restaurant].

The Speaker: If he could go a little further up the road too, it would help.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, can I ask you to repeat the name of the roads that she mentioned just now?

The Speaker: Orchid Heights, Raven Avenue, and Devon.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I assume that we're talking about safety measures for those roads, sir, because that's what the question.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Soft shoulder works.

Mr. Speaker, I can't be aware to say directly that those roads are part of what they're listing, but overall, I know there are some that the Member for Prospect had sent over to us to look at, [and] do some repair works to. As I mentioned in my answer earlier, from here on out we're looking at how we put bike lanes on some of these roads and maybe calming measures and safety measures.

Pretty much from the time we set up that committee, it has been looking at how we can improve all of the roads that we do from now on for walkers, riders, e-scooters and everything else.

The Speaker: Further Supplementary.

The honourable Member for Prospect.

Mrs. Sabrina T. Turner: Final question, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

Can the Honourable Minister provide any updates of any plans for the Spotts straight? Understanding that it is a strip of road that has been very topical [given] how many deaths have occurred on that road; and it has been placed in the public domain that there is a proposal, or it's suggested, that a roundabout would be put in the vicinity of Poindexter into Shamrock.

Would he be able to provide an update with any proposed plans in dealing with speed-calming measures for the Spotts stretch, as we all know it?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, there have been several proposals for the Shamrock Road and I know several individuals who live on the Shamrock road who have concerns.

I've been asking for meetings with the NRA and the committee group that we put together, so, *if the Member is okay with that, I can put something in writing for her directly on Shamrock*—what are the proposals for it after meeting with everyone who lives on Shamrock who has concerns and ideas that they would love to propose. Also, it would be a bit far-fetched for me to actually put those out here without speaking to the committee and see what they have.

The Speaker: Further Supplementary.

The honourable Member for Savannah.

Hon. Heather D. Boddén, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to say thanks to the Minister. I know he's working very hard to resolve many of these issues, but we have been seeing too many accidents. In fact, we're having fatalities now, with regard to people on bicycles and these electric scooters, and I just would like to thank the Minister for giving his update in regards to what measures will be taken.

I thank you, sir.

The Speaker: People just need to slow down and stop driving stupidly. I'm forgetting I'm Speaker right now.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, you have a response?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Members for Savannah and Prospect for their questions.

We continue to work hard for the whole Cayman Islands, to try to make the roads safer, much more appealing, and much better. We would love to one day get to where we say—as we're campaigning on *Road to Zero*—zero fatalities. Hopefully, one of these days we'll be able to get there but, again, I agree with you. People just need to take their time and not speed but, unfortunately, that's part of it, I assume.

The Speaker: Sorry, honourable Member for George Town East. Very delayed response.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister. I wonder if he could tell us when they expect to have the licensing and standards for electric scooters and the safety measures to be implemented.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping we can actually have some of it implemented and brought back here in the first quarter, assuming that we get full support from the House.

The Speaker: First quarter, 2025.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I agree with you, sir.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

QUESTION NO. 19

UPDATE ON CONSTRUCTION OF APPLE BLOSSOM AFFORDABLE HOME DEVELOPMENT

The Speaker: I recognise the elected Member for West Bay Central.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Elected Member for West Bay Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question number 19, standing in my name, to the Honourable Minister of

Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, and Transport & Development.

Can the Honourable Minister explain why there has been no progress on the construction of Apple Blossom Affordable Home Development, located in the constituency of West Bay Central, since its ground breaking in May of this year?

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

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the development of the new Birch Tree Heights, formerly Apple Blossom subdivision has continued to be a priority for me and the Ministry. I can confirm that since the ground breaking ceremony in May, plans are progressing.

Mr. Speaker, I am reliably informed by the National Housing Development [Trust] (NHDT) that the subdivision plans were modified to provide greater efficiency of the land use that will accommodate the 60 homes, but there will be a phased construction approach for the development, with the first phase consisting of 14 homes

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Supplementaries

The Speaker: Supplementaries?

The honourable Member for West Bay Central.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Honourable Minister said that there had been a modified plan and a phased approach. Can the Minister give a little bit more information as to when the 14 homes will actually start construction because last that I knew, the re-parcellation had already been completed and approved, and that's the reason why we broke ground.

This is quite concerning, this isn't just about affordable homes, we actually have deplorable homes and we have—I was just making notes here—I have three constituents who live in this area who are on demand oxygen; one of whom had to be transported last week to a hospital in the US, all relating to lung issues. This is no coincidence, and I would really like to see this [as] a priority, so if the Minister could just answer that I would really be most grateful.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, are you in a position to respond to that?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, yes, sir.

Mr. Speaker, some of the delays that we've had with the—I keep calling it Apple Blossom because I know it better as Apple Blossom—Apple Blossom site

in West Bay was that we had some kickback from some of the residents in the neighbourhood which the Member for West Bay Central is well aware of. It was about the storm water management section of it. I think the National Trust may have owned part of the property to the back of it and wanted to leave a section of the property to the back with a pond, and the neighbours were a little bit concerned that when we started to fill the property up... They actually wrote to us about negotiating and then trying to figure out how the water was going to run.

I think the Member for West Bay Central actually met with some of the neighbours talking about that. That has been one of the delays that we've had, of going back to recreate a whole new stormwater management [plan] for the property to make sure that not only those who are in Apple Blossom are protected, but [that] the neighbours on the outside of that were not going to be affected because they were saying that most of the water that runs off from them was running into the part of the pond that we were actually filling in for the 60 homes.

That's why we relooked it in order to take it as a phased approach to say, okay Mr. Speaker, the 14 homes that we wanted to start were to be able to transition the people from on the original site onto the new site. Mr. Speaker, there's no one else who understands down there better than me. I have been there, I've seen it, I've walked through it; I understand what's going on. As a matter of fact, yes, it may not be moving at the pace that I want it to move, but I agree with you that it has to be fixed. Yes, that's why we're going to move over there, and said look, *let us cut it in two now, let us get the 14 done so we can move.*

Mr. Speaker, I have tried my best to help those people, to try to get the Department of Financial Assistance (DFA) (formerly Needs Assessment Unit) involved to try to help them as much as I can because I know how they're living. I know that people are sitting there in oxygen, but I'm only one man and I've tried my best as to how I can get it done. We know that we've tried and we know some of them are very reluctant to move and some of them really want to just move into a new home. We know that some of them even may not be able to afford the homes. Mr. Speaker, that's why we tried to create the Lease to Own Program. We even talked about DFA having to own some of these homes to help these people.

I don't want anyone to go play politics on both sides and think that one person is trying to back the boat next to anyone else. Let us not go down the road and play politics with it because I don't want to get in there. We are here to help the people. I know the people down there are struggling. I get the telephone calls every day from the people down in West Bay. I just sent messages to Planning [Department] this morning asking for updates on Apple Blossom site because I want to get those people out of the situation that they are in.

Mr. Speaker, I'll leave it like that and I'll wait to see what the next supplementary will be.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for West Bay Central.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I have two Supplementary questions. However, I would like to just say for the record, I am not here to play politics; I am not here to grandstand. That's one of the reasons why I didn't respond to half of these debates that we had the last couple of days because at the end of the day, the issues are real, and whilst the Minister may be receiving phone calls, it's in my area. I see it every single day. My job is to represent the people there, and my only question is to ask where things are at. You're saying that you have a phased approach because of the storm water management. We know, [and] you know the homes that have these individuals there now, yes, it's an issue; it's a safety issue.

Can you please advise if you have to deal with the storm water management first or if the 14 homes can be started while you're doing whatever re-parcellation or whatever plans are taking place closer down to the pond because the issue isn't going east. What we are looking at is in the western part of the development for the individuals who are currently living there, so if you could just let me know and let the constituents who are listening know if the phased approach will start anytime soon for those 14 homes.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I thought I may have answered that just now. Let me just go back over.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, we have taken a phased approach to split it up, to deal with the 14 homes now and not worry about the full build out of the 60 because the full build out of the 60 was what was holding up everything; so we are looking now at starting up with the first 14 so that we can transition the people from there into the new homes and then we can deal with the rest as we continue to move along.

The storm water management actually will affect those who are part of the remaining lots. Hence, yes, that's why we are saying, *okay, while we work on the storm water management, we're going to look at delivering these 14, and separate them from [the others]*. I just want to make sure I'm saying it clearly; that we're going to separate the 14 so we can start them while we work on the storm water management for the rest because I don't want the storm water management to hold up the 14 and we can't deliver the homes for the people down there.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for West Bay Central.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable Minister for answering that question.

My final question: you spoke a bit about it with the homes that are more up to the east of the development, the neighbouring properties which would be to the far end of Leona Lane or to the far end of Vibe Lane, so to the borders of the pond. I was just wondering—and this might not be something that you may have the answer to but I'm *gonna* still ask it—when they were filling up the pond or the area that still had a bit of water, the neighbouring properties, quite a few of them—I think it was four of them—the marking of their parcels were completely removed. They can't even find their landmarks and the fences have been taken down.

I was just wondering if you could say if this is something that you are aware of and if it's something that NHDT has intentions to re-parcel and repair, because I know particularly two of the homes have young children and because these fences have been removed, people are now traversing even in cars from the Apple Blossom Development and trying to take a short cut through to Leona Lane. Like I said, Minister, I'm not sure if you're aware of it, but I'd like to ask the question here today.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I've been aware about some of the boundary markers that need to be reinstalled, but again, I understand that when the layout of the boundary markers are being set back, that NHDT will be putting those boundary markers in. Some of them might have been knocked out from where the tractor was moving around and they have agreed with the owners. On the fencing, [I can provide that back in writing](#). I'm not sure about that, but I'll find out from them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The honourable Member for West Bay South.

Mr. André M. Ebanks, Elected Member for West Bay South: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the Honourable Minister could confirm, for the phased approach, the first 14 and then the 60, do you have adequate and sufficient budget now, to build those?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, that's correct.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

QUESTION NO. 20 TIMELINE FOR COMPLETION OF A NEW

CONCRETE MORGAN'S HARBOUR DOCK IN WEST BAY SOUTH

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

Mr. André M. Ebanks: Good morning, again, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to ask the Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development question number 20 standing in my name. Question: Given that Supplementary funding was specifically approved in the last Finance Meeting on 11th October, 2024, can the Honourable Minister provide a timeline for completion of a new concrete Morgan's Harbour Dock in West Bay South.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the project is progressing as planned. The business case has been approved, the construction documents are finalised, and the application for the coastal works licence is under review by the Ministry of Sustainability.

The timeline for the project as followed [by] the procurement process for the general contractor commenced on November 29th on Bonfire. The bid submission will close on December 20th, with evaluation of the process and submission of the valuation report to the PAHI entity procurement committee expected by December 30th. The government remains committed to delivering the central infrastructure for the people of West South, and we will continue to ensure that the process is carried out efficiently and transparently.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementaries?

The honourable Member for West Bay South.

Supplementaries

Mr. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Minister for the answer. That is the timeline for procurement but, assuming these dates are met, what is the timeline thereafter projected to complete the actual build?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I can't answer that question until I get the coastal work licence from the Ministry of Sustainability. Once we get that, we will be able to give better projections when it comes to timelines.

The Speaker: Supplementary, the honourable Member for West Bay South.

Mr. André M. Ebanks: Thank you; and thank you, Minister, for the answer. Have you gotten a timeline from the Ministry for Sustainability on when the coastal works licence will be issued?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I have not gotten a timeline from the current Minister of Sustainability.

I don't know, it's almost like I need to ask a Supplementary question on the other side to the Minister that was over there to find out whether she could give me a timeline on it, as I don't know anything about it until it gets out.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for West Bay Central, if you have a question?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I do have a question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Right, because I don't want this back and forth between who has been a Minister and who is a Minister now. It doesn't take anything forward.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker; at the same time, the beauty of democracy is that if we place ourselves in a position to ask questions, we can still allow our constituents to see—

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I don't need a lecture on that. If you have a question, please ask the question. That is all I'm asking.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I have a question, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Honourable Minister if he can advise when the application was submitted to the Ministry, because up until I left my role, there had not been an application submitted.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I cannot advise the exact date that it was sent over to her Ministry at the time, but I will be able to give the House an update on it later on, if it's ok with you, sir.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

QUESTION NO. 21

UPDATE ON RELOCATION OF THE BUS SHELTER FROM ITS CURRENT LOCATION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE AREA OF SHAMROCK ROAD, SAVANNAH

The Speaker: I recognise the honourable Member for Savannah.

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to ask the Honourable Minister for Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development question number 21 in my name. Can the Honourable Minister provide an update on the plans to relocate the bus shelter from its current location in the Countryside area of Shamrock Road in Savannah?

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: I recognise the honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure, Transport and Development to answer.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, following discussions with the Member for Savannah, the National Roads Authority, the Public Transport Unit, the stakeholders and the Ministry, it has been agreed that the new bus shelter will be located into the grass area within the median roundabout of the Countryside Shopping Village.

The plans for the new bus shelter include:

1. Exclusive bus access— designated access points for the buses to enter and exit safely without disrupting the flow of traffic;
2. Capacity space for up to three buses to park at a time; and
3. A covered shelter; a modern, covered structure to provide protection and comfort for the public transport users.

This relocation will improve accessibility for passengers, enhanced safety for road users, and support the continued development efficiency for public transport infrastructure in the area. The relocation of the construction is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2025.

The Speaker: Supplementaries?

The honourable Member for Savannah.

Supplementaries

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to thank the Minister for that update. I'm merely trying to avoid any further accidents or deaths in our area, which is a fast-growing community. I do appreciate the Minister providing us with full information this morning, on the relocation of the bus shelter.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I have authorised the delivery of two statements by the Honourable Premier relating to Supplementary Appropriations.

The Honourable Premier Section 11 (5) Statement

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

The first statement will be relating to DAL— Ministry of District Administration and Lands. It's a section 11(5) statement, as you indicated, and I thank you for the opportunity to bring to the attention of this honourable Parliament the exceptional circumstances for the Appropriation changes which have resulted in the Supplementary appropriations initiated by the Minister of District Administration and Lands for 2024-2025 budget period.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet considered and approved the following request for section 11(5) appropriations in accordance with the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) by the Ministry of District Administration and Lands Appropriation lines so as to satisfy the 2024-2025 expenditure needs as follows.

EA 42 – Cayman Brac and Little Cayman street lighting

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet approved the increase to this vote by \$50,000 via section 11(5) of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) (PMFA) to facilitate the installation in order to complete light pole installation along the Big Channel Bluff Road, Clemenshyme Drive, Myrtle Jane Drive and Oscar Drive in Cayman Brac. The aforementioned increase in EA 42 by \$50,000 was the result of a decrease in EI 87 – Ministry of District Administration and Lands Equity Injection by the said \$50,000.

DAL 1 – Policy Advice and Support to the Minister of District Administration and Lands

Mr. Speaker, DAL 1 was increased by \$40,000 in 2024 and \$160,000 in 2025 via section 11(5), to create a role of Senior Project Manager within the Ministry responsible for District Administration which was needed to manage and facilitate the timely completion of ongoing and upcoming major projects in Cayman Brac.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to explain these two exceptional circumstances which have resulted in the supplementary expenditure by virtue of section 11(5) for the 2024/2025 budgetary years.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Mr. Speaker, the second exceptional circumstance transaction incurred for 2024 related to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. As required by section 11(6) of the PMFA, I make this statement to Members of this honourable House with respect to these exceptional circumstance transactions that were approved by the Cabinet for Finance and Economic Development during the 2024 financial year that ends on the 31st December this year. Such transactions were approved pursuant to section 11(5) of the PMFA.

Mr. Speaker, there were three financial transactions that the Cabinet approved for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development:

- (1) An increase to the 2024 OE 54 – Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility – Annual Premium appropriation by \$31,045;
- (2) An increase to the 2024 OE 9 – Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) Fees appropriation by \$57,279; and
- (3) A compensating reduction to the 2024 FED 1 – Policy Advice and Ministerial Services appropriation by \$88,324.

Mr. Speaker, the exceptional circumstance transactions did not result in an impact on the Government's forecast financial results and position for the 2024 financial year as the appropriation changes were merely a transfer of funds within the same operating expenditure category.

OE 54 – Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility - Annual Premium

Mr. Speaker, during the 2024 financial year, Cabinet approved an increase of \$31,045 to the OE 54 – Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility - Annual Premium appropriation.

The Cayman Islands is a founding member of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF) which provides for a cash pay-out within 14 days of a covered, major, natural catastrophe. The pay-out is based on the severity of the hurricane and losses caused by a hurricane or earthquake, thereby providing member countries with the financial means to respond quickly to ease the social and economic hardships experienced after such disasters.

During 2024, the annual premium for the CCRIF increased to \$1.037 million. The Ministry of Finance did not have sufficient funds in the 2024 OE 54 - Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility - Annual Premium appropriation, to fully cover the expenditure increase, but had sufficient savings within its 2024 FED 1 - Policy Advice and Ministerial Services appropriation to cover the funding shortfall.

OE 9 – Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) Fees

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), is a group of twenty countries that was established in 1973 and focusses on strengthening economic integration; foreign policy coordination; human and social development; and security within its Member countries. Cayman Islands is an Associate Member of CARICOM.

On 4th June, 2024, CARICOM held its Thirty-Eighth Inter-session Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government and approved the 2024 Member States Funded Core Budget of the Caribbean Community Secretariat. This budget included an increase in Member contributions to \$227,208 per annum. This was the first increase in Member contributions since 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Finance did not have sufficient funds in the OE 9 – Caribbean Economic Community (CARICOM) Fees appropriation to fully cover the expenditure increase, but had sufficient savings within FED 1 - Policy Advice and Ministerial Services appropriation to cover the funding shortfall.

The Cayman Islands is an Associate Member of CARICOM and we have seen great benefits since the contributions thereof and we thought it was prudent to continue making the contribution.

Mr. Speaker, the supplementary funding that was required for OE 54 and OE 9 meets the definition of an exceptional circumstance as:

1. The increase in the insurance premium for the CCRIF and the increase in the CARICOM Member contributions were not known to the Ministry of Finance when the 2024 Budget was prepared in December 2023 – and therefore the increase in costs was beyond the control of the Ministry and Cabinet;
2. The Government could be exposed to significant financial risks, potential legal liabilities and disruption of services if it did not pay the increased CCRIF insurance premiums;
3. The Government could potentially lose its Member benefits if it does not keep up with its contributions to CARICOM; and
4. The increase in the insurance premium and CARICOM contributions were recently presented to the Ministry of Finance – making it impractical to request for the supplementary funding, via section 12 of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision).

As previously stated Mr. Speaker, the exceptional circumstance transactions do not have an impact on the Government's forecast financial results and position for the 2024 financial year or the Principles of the Responsible Financial Management as they are merely a transfer of funds within the same appropriation expenditure category and do not increase the overall planned expenditure of the Ministry or the Government.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I thank you for allowing me to explain the exceptional circumstance transactions which were approved by the Cabinet for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development for the 2024 financial year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I have also given leave to the Honourable Minister of Border Control, Labour, Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Wellness to make a statement.

**The Honourable Minister of Border Control,
Labour, Culture, Sustainability & Climate
Resiliency and Wellness**

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Minister of Border Control, Labour, Culture, Sustainability & Climate Resiliency and Wellness, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we may have seen communication, even outside this Parliament in other domains, in terms of trying to impute—

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, I've given you leave to make a statement not to engage in debate.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Okay, thank you for that steer, it is probably wise.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a statement in response to a message circulating on social media from the former Minister of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency, the Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, MP.

Mr. Speaker, the Member should be well aware of the potential termination cost of the existing ReGen Project Agreement having brought the Paper to terminate the project to Cabinet. Mr. Speaker, as the exit of the project agreement has not been finalised, it would be ill-advised to discuss specific details at this time, as the Member should be well aware. Once the Government is in a position to share the final details, it will do so.

I would like to assure the Caymanian public that the Government's objectives in the exit of the Project Agreement is that the best interests of our people are protected. This is of paramount importance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I've also given leave to the Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports and Heritage to make a statement.

**The Honourable Minister of Youth, Sports
and Heritage**

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide an overview of the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Heritage's achievements, ongoing activities and upcoming plans.

Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to recognise Mr. Jordan Crooks for his achievement yesterday in the 100 metre freestyle where he won a bronze medal on behalf of the Cayman Islands.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: The World Championship [race] that he won a couple of years ago, he hasn't actually swam in that event as yet, so we are expecting great things from him in that one as well, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognise and acknowledge our many athletic accomplishments including our showing at the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) Games, the Paris Olympics, Great Britain Summer Championships and so many other athletic platforms this year.

To our young people from our representation with the first Caymanian as Dean of CARICOM and the most recently selected Proud of Them Awardees, these young people not only represent the Cayman Islands in local and international forums but they unite the people of our country. This has become evident as we hear more from our young people and their aspirations but also their desire to learn more about their cultural heritage; promoting, engaging and sharing their excitement, love, support, and bringing about national pride. Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the people and our beautiful Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, now to the works of the core Ministry, its Government Departments and Statutory Authorities and Government Companies (SAGCs). From the beginning of this year to present, the Ministry has accomplished numerous achievements, ranging from:

- Policy review and development;
- Programming and community initiatives and events; to
- Development and enhancement of facilities.

These initiatives have consistently supported and advanced the Ministry's key priorities, which are:

- (1) Talent Identification and Development;
- (2) Enhancement and Empowerment of Youth;

- (3) Awareness and Preservation of Culture & Heritage; and a new priority introduced just this year
- (4) Promoting an Active and Healthy Lifestyle for All.

The Ministry and its entities are deeply involved in:

- The review of various national and organisational policies;
- Developing new initiatives;
- Organising numerous community events;
- Focusing on preserving our heritage;
- Supporting intergeneration programmes;
- Enhancing sports;
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle; and
- Fostering youth development and empowerment, just to name a few.

Recognising the need for promoting active and healthy living in the community, the Ministry and its entities have already begun work and restructuring under this new priority and look forward to enhancing these efforts throughout the remainder of 2024 and into 2025.

Having provided a broad overview, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to share some specific accomplishments with this honourable House. Each of these achievements not only aligns with the Ministry's four priorities but also supports the Cayman Islands Government's Broad Outcomes.

At a Ministry level, noteworthy achievements for 2024 include:

- The provision of over 100 grants being awarded in the areas of Youth, Sports, and Heritage totalling over \$600,000 to date. It is grants of this nature that provide support and assistance to individuals, associations and programmes in our community, benefiting our Caymanians by empowering and developing them in various ways.
- Continued funding to our eight focus sports annually in the sum of \$150,000 each. This was in addition to the grants previously indicated.
- Commencing the revision of the National Youth, and the National Sports Policies, involving broad stakeholder engagement which included individuals from across all relevant sectors, focus groups, a national survey and a comprehensive 3-day workshop.

I am pleased to report that the Ministry is in the process of now reviewing each of the drafted policies, which will be open for public consulta-

tion before being finalised and presented to Cabinet. We recognise that it seems that this is taking some time but these policies are important to our country and must be done with our current circumstances in mind but provide a long-term vision and plan for both the Youth and Sports sector.

- The successful reintroduction and celebration of Emancipation events for the first time in over 62 years both in Grand Cayman and in Cayman Brac, in May of this year. I want to thank the former Minister for bringing this initiative to Cabinet and having the Paper approved.

It is also important to note that five new national symbols were approved by Cabinet as we continued to preserve our heritage and build national pride. With this, the Ministry launched the "Weh We From" campaign to raise awareness and appreciation to the national dish, drink, dessert, dress, and dance.

Mr. Speaker, we commenced the publication of Caymanian heritage books aimed at educating and bringing awareness to Caymanian heritage. The first book in the series, titled *Our National Heroes*, highlights information of Cayman's National Heroes and we were pleased to provide copies to all schools (public and private) and libraries; and I am happy to share that we are in the process of collaborating with local artists for the creation of another book on Emancipation.

The Intergenerational Hub has been utilised as a multifunctional space for various community and organisational activities and programmes. These include youth programmes, intergenerational programmes, exercise and wellness classes for seniors and women; art and craft classes; hosting of events, staff training and conferences, and meetings. In addition, this location is the home for the Youth Service Unit and some Ministry staff.

As a key participant in Cayman Day UK, the Ministry contributed valuable input and time to ensuring that the cultural aspect of our Caymanian cultural heritage was well displayed and engaging to its participants.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak of Heritage, I would like to thank the Cayman Islands Folk Singers on their efforts through community engagement and concerts in helping us to preserve our heritage through Folk Songs. The stories that they tell through songs takes us back in time and brings about fond memories of our past.

Since purchasing the 50 metre and 25 metre pools for the new Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre in December 2023, materials and supplies began arriving on island in July 2024, [with] a final shipment due in January 2025, and ground and installation works to begin in earnest early 2025. The materials which have

arrived thus far were a part of the 2024 USA Olympic swimming trials held in Indianapolis, ensuring that the Cayman Islands benefits from state-of-the-art pools in the new aquatic centre.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continues to participate in cross-governmental and international collaborations with recent contributions that include: providing valuable feedback on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Knowledge Product on Youth, Peace and Security; the Sexual Harassment Bill; and aligning Ministry initiatives with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the works of the core Ministry, led by a very passionate, creative and visionary Chief Officer and Ministry team.

In addition to the core Ministry's accomplishments, I would also like to briefly highlight our entities which are the Department of Sports, and the Youth Services Unit for their continued efforts in providing important services in our community.

The Department of Sports has continued to:

- Expand school [sports] programmes through collaboration with the Department of Education Services.
- Offer community programmes, inclusive of a senior sports day, basketball leagues and clinics, youth camps, fitness activities for our ageing population and women; to enhance participation and player development at all levels.

In addition to these achievements, I wish to highlight the restructuring of the Department that is now underway to take a more holistic and inclusive approach including a focus on community prevention and wellness through sports. The Department of Sports recognises the important role they play to support, a healthy and active lifestyle for all ages, mental and physical wellbeing; and prevention of certain medical issues, all through sports. This new direction and initiative will benefit all persons, at all ages in our community as we move towards a "fitness for life" plan.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Services Unit has also continued to grow and develop as a small unit of only eight Caymanians, who in the past year:

- Successfully hosted a "Youth Empowerment Symposium" on economic and social empowerment, featuring a prominent young person.
- Provided leadership opportunities through the CARICOM Youth Ambassadors programme, with representatives attending regional summits. The young persons and National Youth Commission representatives also participated in a virtual summit covering

topics like politics, leadership, and mental health.

- Recognised outstanding youth through the "Proud of Them" initiative.
- Provided an intergenerational summer camp and ongoing intergenerational services, encouraging the interaction and experience for all ages.

Mr. Speaker, our SAGCs in the past year have also been busy and have made many strides, and I wish to make mention of some of their outstanding work.

The National Gallery Cayman Islands (NGCI) and their renowned Art Education Programming continues to thrive with established programmes and initiatives such as Art on The Road, Walkers Art Club, Art Haven, school-based tours, and multiple unique exhibitions.

The National Gallery has:

- Led over 305 educational sessions, reaching a staggering 3,745 students across all three Islands in the first three quarters of this year alone.
- Conducted free, school-based tours, connecting over 1,000 students with Caymanian culture through art; and
- Displayed 12 unique exhibitions across five locations on Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman, attracting over 15,000 visitors.

I take this opportunity to invite the public to visit the National Gallery and participate in the various programmes that they offer.

The Cayman Islands National Museum also successfully curated captivating exhibits including: honouring National Hero and song writer, Hon. Leila Ross-Shier; another commemorating the return of Emancipation Day; and an exhibit reflecting Hurricane Ivan and the importance of hurricane preparedness.

I would also invite the public to stop by the Museum and learn more about the important facets of our heritage.

In addition to these exhibits, Emancipation Day activities included a drum circle and a poetry competition, engaging the community in celebrating the festivities with this reintroduced holiday. They also offer regular "Looky Ya!" events during the week, allowing artisans to display their magnificent work and for persons to stop by to buy a delicious plate of local food.

Demonstrating their commitment to preserving Caymanian heritage, with the support from the Board members, the museum was able to secure 100 valuable books before disposal by the Cayman Islands Law School. This ensures the preservation of these important resources for future generations, and I would like to thank them for these efforts, Mr. Speaker.

Lastly on the Museum, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform and welcome the recently appointed

Director, who brings a wealth of knowledge, qualification and experience to guide the Museum forward.

Capital Projects

Finally, I want to also bring to the attention of this honourable House several key capital projects by the Ministry. These include capital works such as:

- Installation of NCCTV Cameras at our sporting facilities;
- Financial support for a new West Bay five-a-side court;
- Procurement and upcoming installation of Ball Catch Nets at five facilities: Ed Bush Sports Complex, Annex, Haig Bodden Sports Complex, Ronald Forbes Field, and East End which was completed very recently;
- The Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre, previously mentioned;
- Upgrades to the Basketball court in East End, which has now been refenced, provided with new hoops and resurfaced to accommodate Basketball and pickle ball.
- Completion of hydraulic lifts to the new lighting system at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex.
- Ongoing upgrades, development and maintenance at all of the Ministry's facilities;
- Restoration of the Pink House, a historical site on Goring Ave.;
- Plans for the expansion and development of Donovan Rankine Playing Field in East End to include change rooms/restrooms & grandstands;
- Plans for the renovation and expansion of Dixon Park in East End; and
- The reopening of the former senior home in East End, which will be used as an intergenerational cottage for the eastern districts. This grand opening will be held on 14th December, 2024 at 3:30 p.m. and all are invited, especially the Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker our endeavours are not achievable without the support from other Ministries. It is through this partnership and collaboration that we are able to achieve more in our communities. One such example is the work being undertaken for the rebuilding of the dock at the East End Heritage Field with the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and Transport & Development. Also, I wish to thank the

Public Works Department (PWD) for their ongoing support and expertise on a number of projects that we are working on.

Mr. Speaker, while we have accomplished much, the Ministry is mindful that there is still much work to be done in these subject areas. For the remainder of the year and for 2025, the Ministry is committed to ensuring:

- It continues to support efforts by increasing district sports and youth activities, alongside intergenerational programming.
- Continued restructuring and enhancement of the Department of Sports.
- Review of the management of aspects of our heritage as it relates to the Ministry and the Cayman Islands, to ensure that this subject area has the support and attention that is necessary.
- The Ministry will also be embarking on more private sector partnerships to return historical items pertinent to Cayman's heritage; collaborating for increased visibility in the Ministry's and its entities initiatives; improve sporting facilities and competitions as well as create new opportunities for our artisans through academic and exhibit experiences.

I must acknowledge the entities recently transferred to us:

- The Gender Affairs Unit; and
- The National Drug Council

We are very early in the transition of these two entities but I am eager to work with them to ensure the achievement of their goals for the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, as this honourable House has heard, the team in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Heritage has been very busy, continuously working to achieve the broad outcomes and the Ministry's priorities. Their efforts and work can be seen in the community and I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Chief Officer and the Ministerial team; entities and SAGCs under the Ministry for their hard work, dedication and passion.

The Ministry will continue to work for the people of these Islands and we look forward to seeing what's to come in the coming months.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to everyone for your valuable time and attention, but more importantly, for your support to our programmes and services.

God Bless.

The Speaker: Madam Clerk.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: None.

Parliament of the Cayman Islands

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READINGS

OLDER PERSONS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

[Continuation of debate thereon]

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

The honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important Bill for the country. Our population has grown and we have an aging population. In just a few weeks' time, I will celebrate my 70th birthday, God willing, so I'm in that category now.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Not a long time, but I am in it. However, with that comes knowledge and wisdom and experience.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the plea from the Leader of the Opposition, and he was certainly on target. We have to find a way to do more for our seniors; to protect them better, to ensure that their liveable conditions in the home, for instance, is just that—liveable.

Mr. Speaker, for one that I am very familiar with, their housing stock is in very bad shape. Many of them, far too many of them, and the cost to repair is a maddening state. People seem to have gone crazy with how they expect to charge. They no longer want to work and be paid \$20, \$25 \$30 or 40 dollars per hour. Mr. Speaker, these days, they talk about job work for \$400 to \$1,000, when it's only a few hours of work. As I said, it's a maddening state.

The cost of living is hitting all of us very hard, and our seniors who only live on the Department of Financial Assistance (formerly NAU's) assistance, have it very, very difficult. We would like to see that this is increased. As I said yesterday, when I came here, senior people, poor people, only got \$25 as I said, they got that only if they voted for the right person. Right now,

we are at \$1,250. That's not the only benefit they get, but that's what they go to the shop with and that is what I'm talking about, that aspect of their life—the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, you and other Members know, as well as I do, [that] we have passed Motions; we've talked, we've begged, we have shown how our people continue to suffer through these extremely high cost-of-living items; and I don't know, but we must take the bull by the horns and do something that safeguards our families' little income. This is not an easy task, we know, as we import everything and the cost of purchasing, shipping within the countries we purchase and order from, and then shipping to us, these costs are fuelled, they say, by the effects of the pandemic. That is no doubt a reality.

We face high costs, and our seniors suffer it most because they do not have the kind of salary other people have, and they depend on that NAU assistance. We would like to see it rise to what we believe is the poor people mark. Whether we can do so as a Government, we will have to wait and see. However, I must implore all who sell goods, to charge for their goods with a heart.

As I said, the fact is our seniors have to eat and live comfortably, and to be hungry, have no lights—and you know that there are people, seniors, who are living in this day and age in Cayman, without electricity. [They] can't pay the Bill and if a Member of Parliament (MP) cannot help, and somehow, they are not getting NAU to help, then what happens to them? To be hungry, to have no lights, meaning they don't have no running water, no air conditioning, not even a fan, because they have no electricity even for our hot midsummer nights.

Their homes are badly in need of repair and we cannot allow bureaucracy to slow down needed repairs; and that is what is happening to us: too much bureaucracy that civil servants have to endure and we put it there talking about good governance. Good governance? People starve on you. People's roofs leaking. Don't people realise what that is? I had to grow up with it. Huh! Slipped my floor bed under a big table Grandma had. Roof leaking. I know what it is. I went through it, I feel it.

Importantly, Mr. Speaker, and very vexing, are the charges of cost I come across, from some construction [companies] because, as I said, it seems it's no more hourly or a daily paid rate today. When you need such work done, you are told, "*We do job work.*". That's what we are told and you compare the two different costs. What should be a good salary for hourly-paid people? You will see how much over and above the job work, and sometimes ridiculously so above a properly paid day's pay. I don't know how much we can do about it because we are a free enterprise country. We're not unionised and so people can do mostly as they please. I beg.

Some of the rates and costs I hear of, and experience, will drive our seniors and poor people unable to build or our seniors to renovate and repair and even to do some of what should be quick and not difficult work; and all this will do, Mr. Speaker, is to drive down the good standard of living we've been used to, especially for the built housing stock which many seniors have. It is old. When you check it, they are old homes and we will get a worse standard of living because of the need for repairs.

As I said, a leaking roof is not a good thing and we seem to get bogged down far too much. We put these systems in place, and civil servants have to abide by them or they get written up by the Auditor General—but you know the position I used to take, Mr. Speaker. I didn't care anything about the Auditor General. They live in a good house. They come here to write, we pay them well. If they don't like you, they will write badly about you, but I'll stand here too, and criticise them when I have to. Tit for tat, that's what they got from me, but we got the job done and that's what is important.

Now, I don't expect that from the civil servants because they are officers contracted by a higher authority. I have a higher authority too, and that is the people who vote for me. That is a higher authority. To me, that is what matters, so at this point, I plea to one and all who have to do this work, to be understanding that these Cayman Islands do not consist of all rich people. There are old, and I said, we have an aging population. Old and poor people who need work done and are willing to pay and government can help.

We vote certain funds which, ha! When you find out what the cost is now, from what it was maybe three years ago, it's probably 50 per cent more; and that is not just materials I'm talking about. I'm talking about what people are charging you. No conscience, it seems to me, and as I said, our Islands do not consist of rich people. Many, yeah, but our oldest, aging, people are not. Then when they need repairs or an addition to their home, which they can't pay for because of these so-called job work—which doesn't mean, you know, Mr. Speaker, that it gets done quickly, you know. Oh, no, but certainly costs more than an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. It is not good. Not good, Mr. Speaker. Let me move on.

Mr. Speaker, at my public meeting recently, I spoke about my strong support for the establishment of a dedicated department for older persons, right? Talk to the right people about it. That would be a department that embodies a focus on the unique needs and contributions of our senior citizens. Currently, older persons are categorised under Children and Family Services, which does not reflect, from my point of view anyway, the distinct challenges and requirements we face as we grow older.

I'm saying that, and I'm 70, and I really don't think I'm old, but I mix, I know, I have senior citizens, not just in West Bay, throughout this country. We know

the challenges, we feel them ourselves and so, as a senior person, I have personally witnessed the obstacles older adults encounter in accessing comprehensive care and support and while I certainly appreciate recent amendments, and the attempts made by the Ministry aimed at improving the situation, I do believe that bold steps must be taken to ensure the effectiveness of this initiative and I'm wondering, just within a couple of months, how much that could be done because the House, as I said yesterday, will be dissolved soon.

I believe the creation of a stand-alone Older Person Department is not merely beneficial, it is essential. Centralising oversight, I think, will help eliminate the neglect and mismanagement that often arise when responsibilities are dispersed among various agencies, so a dedicated department could streamline services enabling our older individuals to access the support they need without confusion or unnecessary delays. Right now, they have to go here, there, and everywhere, to get the services that they need at a time when some are immobile.

Most of them cannot use computers to access what is now becoming the regular. *"You got it on your computer, you got it on your computer."* Oh, yeah? I-Pads? They can't; and yet, as I said, [that is] nearly everything that we have been doing because we want government to be as smart as possible and we think that's the way—but then, what about our older people who can't access these things? Where do we sit with them and meet with them? That means getting staff in our communities!

We don't want to increase the civil service, but we do need people going out to where our old people are. We need them working, whether you call them Community Development Action Committees (CO-DACs) or whatever you call them. Whatever name you give them, we need people. We don't need people who just go and take a photo, a picture, or dress-up, no—and we do have some who work, no two ways about that. We are very much appreciative of what they do, but I believe it is time for a more holistic approach in our communities.

Historically, the management of services for older persons was concentrated on clinical needs for those who were particularly vulnerable, and I believe that such a new department could embrace a broader perspective, taking into account the well-being of all older persons—all of them—regardless of their economic or social status. From my own experience, I know that our needs extend far beyond health care. We hear about the cost of health care. Yes. Older persons require programmes that enhance their social, emotional, and psychological well-being.

I believe a dedicated department, Mr. Speaker, can implement such holistic care strategies, which would significantly improve quality of life and foster greater independence for them—and you know, when

I say independence, don't think that our old people want people just to come and do something for them. They go until they can go no more. They are *too* independent.

My mother died in 2016 at 92. She was in bed for about eight years. My mother was a person, when she could work she worked two jobs to raise me, of course, because I come from a single-parent family. She didn't want people to do things for her. When she could not move any longer, I asked God why, knowing how independent she was, why? When she couldn't move, I came to realise it was much of a blessing because I could keep track of her. If she could move, ha! Ninety-two or not, she would have been going.

They are independent. They don't want people to just come to do things, so we need to do things to help foster that ingrained attitude of theirs so, Mr. Speaker, to further empower our community, I propose the appointment of a dedicated person, whatever you call them, for older persons. That role would serve as a vital bridge between older citizens and the government, ensuring that their voices are heard even in policy-making processes, because that person would advocate for [their] rights and address pressing issues such as discrimination and inadequate services.

I understand, Mr. Speaker. I know about the financial aspects. I understand there would be concerns regarding resource allocation for a standalone department; however, the long-term benefits, improved service delivery, enhanced quality of life and empowered senior citizens would far outweigh any initial investments—and I am talking about this, but I believe there were proposals put forward some time ago by the Department of Children and Family Services. I don't know what happened to that, maybe it is somewhere about growing dust. Maybe we need to find it, or get back to the people who put it together and deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I think establishing a dedicated older persons department with the vital staff, is crucial for fostering a more inclusive society, a more inclusive community and I urge us to take these suggestions seriously, as we strive for meaningful progress for older persons in our community. I want to put on record my sincere appreciation of the work done by the present Ministry and the present department led, I think, by Ms. Paulinda Mendoza-Williams, [who is] in the Chamber today, and the care and attention she gives to the issues. We must also be very thankful for the various efforts made by Ms. Seymour, and her foresight in plans and initiatives she proposes; and as I said, the Ministry, for the work they do.

I'm glad that we have a Chief Officer who opens the door to me as Parliamentary Secretary, and I can talk with her. I can talk to Ms. Williams and Ms. Seymour. Ms. Seymour does a great job. This is not a paid position, it's her heart, I know. She worked for me when we had community development, but she knows the fight that we had to get things done because social

development was always the bastard child in the government. *"What are you doing with that money?"*

Never forget when we tried to get the sports field. Our first facility, *huh*. I left Cabinet that day with tears in my eyes when we were told "\$3 million? Are you mad?" While we had already agreed in Caucus. I said, *"Yeah, but I am not that easy to push down."* I went and did some thinking. Named it, came back the next week. You never heard *quehey*. Passed.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I could go on ad infinitum on these issues, about how social development was treated and I know a little bit about it from Ms. Hylton's days, because she was the star who made things happen for children's services in this country.

Now, some of those children, like me, are in the forefront. We now, are our own safeguards. The big trees that shaded us, the big trees that protected us, they are gone. We are now the vanguard. We are now the ones. Ha, I hope I don't die now though, but anyway... It is us next, so we have to do what we can for our people. These persons who I named are very interested in the welfare of our seniors, and as a government, we certainly are thankful for their work.

At my public meeting, Mr. Speaker, I also spoke about the aging population and the need for more residential care. The growing number of older persons in our Islands requires a proactive approach to ensuring their well-being and dignity. Refurbishing existing residential care facilities, and creating additional space is critical for meeting the needs of our population. Key reasons, Mr. Speaker, why this should be a national priority are the Cayman Islands, like much of the world, is experiencing a demographic shift with an increasing number of older persons, and that demographic requires adequate residential care services to ensure that the most vulnerable among them, those unable to live independently, have access to a safe and supportive environment.

That's why we took time. That's why we rushed for the opening of the mental health facility, so that they have a decent place to live independently because many don't; and it would be a supportive environment for them. Older persons who can no longer manage living in their own home deserve environments that prioritise their dignity, comfort, and individuality, because they still have that.

Updated and modern residential care services will provide comfortable living spaces and accessibility for mobility challenges. Facilities, Mr. Speaker, that foster a sense of community and belonging, where they are together. A place where they'll meet others, and I know because I have a sister who worked over thirty years. The government treats her well, yes, but I know she longs to be amongst people with whom she can do things and talk to people about.

Without proper facilities, older persons face neglect. That is one of the big things. They face neglect in their little home if they are living with some children, some children are only looking to see if they got that DFA [stipend]. They know that pay day better than me. They know it, and they don't treat the parents bad. Thank God! I'm not going to say that is as widespread as some people might want to push it, because I also know that there are those who take care of their own.

Then there is us; us, the representatives, who they call on, that we have to drive them, we have to pick them up, we have to go get medicine for them, we have to go to the shop for them. I went to the shop for one the other night and what did they say I was doing? Peeing in public. You imagine? That's what you go through as a representative. The lies that they tell on you. You can't go to the supermarket now, as a representative.

Without proper facilities, older persons face neglect. Yes. They face substandard living conditions which negatively affect their quality of life and our current residential care facilities need to be upgraded to meet modern health, safety, and caregiving standards. Golden Age Home in West Bay—I see that took my name off the sign, put up something very bland. I believe I am going to ask for it to be put back, though.

That was built a long time before we turned it into the good home that it is, but it has limited work to be done to it, and refurbishment, to ensure compliance with the standards, creating safe spaces for all residents to live and the staff to work, because we forget that we have to depend on outside people—if not 100 per cent then 99 per cent—to take care of our seniors in those homes, and in their [own] houses too. Yes. We just can't just throw them around, they have to have a safe place to work and many of our oldest persons require specialised care for conditions, such as dementia, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

Additional residential care facilities with trained staff and proper medical infrastructure are essential to address these needs effectively. Not all families are equipped to provide full-time care for their aging loved ones. The government does step in and help, but help especially for those with complex medical or personal needs.

One gripe I have: Cayman Islands National Insurance Company (CINICO). You get assistance, you get qualified, they need assistance, they have it; but the person that is getting it, who doesn't have anything, they have to get help from DFA and CINICO says, "*You gotta pay the bill first.*" I mean this *really* vexes me. How in the world is anyone who doesn't have any money *gonna* put up the money first?! What happens then, is that the staff they have must wait about two weeks before they get paid—and those persons are paying rent, paying transport and paying their own bills.

We have to change this Honourable Members, we have to change it! How in the world does a person with no salary—*sick*—going to come...? How? I've

talked to them. I understood the premise behind that happening. What was happening [was that] certain family members were getting the cheques and not paying [the carers], that's what was happening so they took this drastic turn, but it doesn't have to be that way.

Not everybody is like that; find a way to deal with them, but don't destroy a system that is meant to help people. It is not helping people right now. As good as the whole CINICO idea is and it works—except for things like that. We have to change it, dear friends, we have to change that. It's not helping, it is causing many problems in the homes where that is happening.

The expanded residential care services offer families that peace of mind knowing their loved ones are in a supportive and professional environment. Look what else happens, older persons who lack access to appropriate residential care often now have to turn to hospitals for long-term care, they're taking up spaces in the hospitals too which strains our healthcare resources. You have to be constantly calling up the hospital, calling up Ms. Lizzette and saying, please try to talk to the doctor and keep this person there a week longer, two weeks longer, because they can't be helped at home.

If they had the centres I'm talking about, they could be sent there and taken care of. Dedicated residential facilities can alleviate that burden by offering appropriate long-term and palliative care options. Refurbishing and expanding our residential care services will create job opportunities for Caymanians interested in health care, caregiving and facility management too, we hope.

Mind you Mr. Speaker, that's the problem we have because our young people don't want to go there, they don't want to go clean any old person. They don't want to do it! Some of them that I know are strong, healthy individuals could be doing so, but they don't want to do it, just like we didn't have anyone who wanted to go in a garbage truck. They don't think that's good, that's below them. However, with some pushing or better education of their surroundings, their environment, they will soon come to understand that these things can offer a good career where they can contribute to the local economy.

Thank God, we still have the old people who can talk to us, tell us a little bit about our history and how to be more compassionate. As the population ages the demand for residential care services will continue to grow.

Speaking, Mr. Speaker, about how the older persons know where we come from, as I go through the district of West Bay—I say West Bay because I know West Bay better, Mr. Speaker, you and Kurt knew George Town better. I know West Bay better so I can speak mostly from that—going through the various avenues and roads, whole streets, all the old people are gone. Go down Watercourse Road, go to South Church Street, I don't know of one of the seniors there that is

there anymore. From the four-way stop up to the police station, all of them, [including] my in-laws and others, gone.

This year will be the 43rd year I have my Christmas seniors' event and of course, Mr. Speaker, not one of the original 22, I think it was, who met at my house for the first one is there. They are all gone; all gone. Mind you, some of them didn't vote for me after all, you know.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke at our meeting and I did broach the subject before, I've talked with our Chief Officer and I have talked to Ms. Williams; I didn't get the chance to talk to Ms. Seymour about it yet. There are two areas in West Bay that I'm looking at:

- John Silver's Inn, which is about 12 rooms and has space to expand. Still a good building. We could be utilising and renovating that for a senior citizens home.
- There is a home belonging to government on Birch Tree Hill Road, which has a lot of property. That's a two or three bedroom house now, but it has space to build; you could probably put 25 rooms there.

While I am trying to conduct an exercise with them, the plan for a new high school, I've thrown that into the mix, the possibilities for a new seniors' residential care home, and hopefully we will get something done. If they went with John Silver's it's a much quicker exercise—some renovation, the right staffing, of course, other facilities that have to be added—but that was a hotel so much of its facilities still exist. Of course, we would have to add to it and hopefully we could move faster.

Of course, funds have to be voted and that sort of exercise has not been done, but I want to talk to the community and get their feedback, what they see, what they feel about it. Refurbishing and creating additional residential care services for older persons in the Islands is not just a practical necessity, but also as far as I'm concerned, a moral imperative. It ensures that our older persons live with dignity and receive the care they need while preparing the Islands for the challenges and opportunities of an aging population. That kind of investment reflects the values of respect, inclusion and community central to what we knew as our Caymanian society.

Mr. Speaker, I've been [speaking] longer than I wanted to, but I did have much that I wanted to put on record, and so I thank you very much for your indulgence and that of the House.

I do want to again thank the Minister for bringing this Law [*sic*] [Bill] and I know how hard he worked to complete it, to go through it so that he understood what it was all about because he was taking over a new subject. I hadn't been involved except for small bits and pieces at Caucus time, but he took the bull by the horns and said we have to do this now, we get it done, get it

completed and make the shifts that are needed in the Bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Member for Savannah.

Hon. Heather D. Bodden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do plan to make a short contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution as the former Parliamentary Secretary for Social Development, I was pleased to support the former Minister André Ebanks on the developments of this significant enhancement to our Older Persons Legislation. These proposed amendments were the result of over two years of policy development, broad and extensive stakeholder consultation working in close cooperation with our Older Persons Council, chaired by former MP, Ms. Lucille Seymour—who I am happy to say is back in the Halls of Parliament with us today, thank you Ms. Lucille for being here—the hardworking staff of the Ministry led by Chief Officer Tamara Ebanks; in coordination with the hardworking staff of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) led by Mrs. Paulinda Mendoza-Williams; and of course, as with all of our Bills, none of this would be possible without the expert assistance of the legal drafting team.

Mr. Speaker, this group of vulnerable people, our seniors, is a group that is near and dear to my heart. Anyone who knows me knows that I have invested a significant amount of time making sure the people who helped build this country are treated with dignity and appreciation in their later years.

What I gather from the current Deputy Premier, Minister of Social Development's presentation of the Bill [is that] the Government supports this Bill, and I thank them for bringing the former minister's excellent work to assist the seniors in our community. I'm proud to support the proposed amendments which help improve the lives of our seniors, in particular, as the Bill introduces safeguards and protections against neglect and abuse, creates for the first time an Older Persons Tribunal which will hear and determine complaints, and specifies that there has to be a department dedicated to the older persons in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to emphasise what the green [paper] section of the Bill states in regards to abuse and neglect of older persons. This is under Part 4A **"Notification and investigation of abuse or neglect"**—

"17D. (1) A person shall not abuse or neglect an older person.

(2) A person commits an offence if that person is in a position of trust in relation to an older person and

engages in abuse or neglect against the older person.

(3) A person who contravenes subsection (2) is liable on —

(a) summary conviction; or

(b) conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term of 12 years.”

That's what the Bill entails. Mr. Speaker, I hope people understand what this means now and I trust that those who are looking after elderly will take heed to this.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. Thanks to the former minister André Ebanks, Member for West Bay South; this is the kind of thoughtful, consulted policy work that shows the country we put Caymanians first. I now thank the new Deputy Premier and Minister of Social Development for his commitment to this Bill.

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]

Honourable Member for West Bay South.

[Pause]

Mr. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to support the Older Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, the Children (Amendment) Bill and the Adoption Bill are significant enhancements in our country's social development framework. I acknowledge that the Government and the responsible Minister recognise this and presented these Bills in this Meeting for debate, and I thank them for it.

The consultations were indeed extensive and painstaking. As the responsible Minister at the time, I knew that this work would not be easy. As the current responsible Minister stated in his presentation of the Bill, it was part of a cohesive strategy to modernise and bolster social development for key vulnerable groups in this country.

When we embarked on this journey for this Bill and the others [that are] part of this meeting, in 2021, we identified that the list of social development issues in this country were accelerating in size and complexity at a very alarming and unhealthy rate.

Some of the key issues were identified before we began to plan enhancements, because on our analysis most of the legal frameworks were woefully out of date. In some cases, no material enhancement had been endeavoured or completed since the sixties or woefully inadequate to meet current challenges and enforce actions.

Staff complements and compensation in all of the key departments have not kept pace; as these jobs got more and more strenuous, staff burnt out and there

was a need for specialists. I'm glad Ms. Paulinda Mendoza-Williams is here, because social workers are one of the most underrated professions, not just in this country, but the world over. You see them every day and you don't necessarily appreciate all that they do, but if they were gone tomorrow you would notice immediately.

The US National Association of Social Workers (NASW) indicates that the proper ratio, depending on client needs, is most commonly one social worker to 20 cases. At the time that we took office in 2021 that ratio was almost triple in the Cayman Islands. We therefore had to dedicate and align the 2022-2023 budget to try to get a bite out of that, because we all, as MPs, face the situation where you want the staff to go out into the community. We all see those, but they're spread way too thin, they can't get to everything. I was grateful when we prepared the 2022-2023 budget that we increased the head count to try to bring that number down—I think the average now is 1:40 cases—increasing the staffing and the support for the social workers.

They may be on different pages now, but the former Premier Wayne Panton and the former—I guess we could call it DP [Deputy Premier] one, DP two, DP three, DP four—DP one will remember that when we were preparing the budget and the cuts were coming in the rounds of the months and the months leading up to the budget, I asked specifically for the wage workers in our care homes to be converted to salary workers. These are the people who are looking after our seniors and hadn't got an increase in years and were working on hourly wages.

I remember saying to DP one, *“I know you gotta make the numbers.” “I know, Premier one, you gotta make the numbers, but these are the people caring for our most vulnerable and this is how much we're paying them? Peanuts? How are we gonna convince anybody else to do these jobs?”* And so said, so done; they got converted.

We know that they have to go back out into the districts. That's why we had to retool the Older Persons Active Ageing Centre (OPAAC) that was centred in George Town with resources, but we have to get the social workers back out into the communities; because as said many times in this debate, they're not necessarily coming out to a centre place, they need to be cared for in the community.

We also knew that each of the departments lacked data and stats to track who is poor. Which constituency? What are the demographics? What are the trends? Yes, we had to invest in technology. Yes, that meant the constituency office would have to be trained on the new technology so we can get that data to find out who exactly needs the most help, and where, and by how much?

The steep increase of mental health issues places a whole other range of complexity on the social

workers. It's not the average cases that they're used to that they can study.

We knew that we had to have enhancements to the disabilities legislation. I don't know what happened, the Ministry tried their best to engage with the Disabilities Council but their proposed enhancements did not come forward even though we tried, but maybe they will come forward in the next administration, because we know that they need assistance.

A very large topic that we know has never been addressed in the country is the social work term of 'adult safeguarding', for the person who's above 18 and hasn't reached 65 yet. We do not have support interventions for adults in that age group. Again, yes, we as MPs, as the Leader of the Opposition said that is a gap, but it has never been tackled. That is *gonna* require a whole other set of frameworks, a whole set of legislation, a whole set of budget, but it needs to happen.

We knew that there was growing homelessness, but we needed to be able to have, as the Deputy Premier said in his remarks back when he was in the Opposition and I was a civil servant, government housing. The only difference of opinion that we had at the time was the suggestion of having just not one or two compounds but dispersed housing throughout the community because these are complex cases with different social and mental challenges. Sociological studies show they can't just be all in one place.

Yes, there can be policy directives that encapsulate the issue, not just to do more research, but because we have a housing crisis in the country for our seniors. They can't just be moved to a hotel. I've done it as Deputy Chief Officer (DCO) on behalf of the Speaker when he was the Premier; to call a hotel and say you need emergency help. What often is *gonna* happen when that call is placed, they're *gonna* respond to me, for a hotel one-off, as me as the former Deputy Premier. If the Minister of Tourism and the current Deputy Premier calls up, a hotel may bend, but there wasn't at that time a stock of hotels that could be relied on at the drop of a hat to consistently take homelessness cases. Even if they do that could only be short term, because we need government transitional homes.

The senior care homes are bursting at the seams. The John Silver's property that the Member for West Bay West [mentioned]—we've already examined that. That had a whole range of challenges in terms of who was in there and is it liveable? We've evaluated it, it has the space for two properties.

What we haven't really seemed to get an answer on is utilising that Crown land, because we don't have the funding of who we can partner with to be able to lease the Crown land for a peppercorn and work with a partner who can build the homes at an affordable cost. That's the work that can still be done, the community has already been canvassed. In several of my constituency meetings, they can see the need and are fine with it.

Birch Tree Hill property is the same thing. It's been cleared, Crown land is there, and it'll be adjoining a preschool. Perfect for some sort of senior centre that could match with the preschool kids, because you can't have challenging social cases next to a preschool. Even with that, the Ministry team will remember and are advising the current Deputy Premier now that we can't wait and some of these costs are astronomical, but what about modular homes?

There's a Caymanian right now, that the Ministry team was working with, who prepares modular homes in other countries, and hasn't done it here because they can't get an answer from the Planning Department on the right requirements to put down a modular home. A Caymanian, doing it elsewhere right now.

Every time the engagement happens, there is never a clear answer of how you can build a modular home that would cut the cost, so we can have the housing stock for the seniors if there definitely is overflow from The Pines and Golden Age. These innovative ideas need to be explored now because we don't have limitless budget, so the bottom line, when we were taking a step back, is that the conclusion is inescapable. We have not prioritised social development, and invested heavily administration from administration to administration, and if we only take bite-size bits, that's where we end up. To quote the Member for West Bay West it's the "bastard child"; and then, here we are.

With the rate at which Caymanian Status is being granted, they are now becoming citizens, and the majority of them are going to be on their way to being an older person so now they're ahead of the queue. The population is about to explode, and no one last night from the Government side actually articulated a position next to that Motion, so we're now approving citizens who are going to get older and add to the pipeline, and still expect the departments, at their current staffing rates, to service everybody? That doesn't make sense. It doesn't compute.

Thus, here we are, doing the best that we can with what we have. We took a step back and said, *"Look, adult safeguarding, given the budget constraints, given the prioritisation, is not going to happen so, let's do what we can with what we have. Let's work with the Older Persons Council; create a legal steering committee; have broad consultation, and at least give the Older Persons Act teeth"*. The same thing for children. The same thing for adoption, because we can't rest on our laurels, we have to do something. These are significant updates.

Put into the legislation in clause 3 is the definition of "economic abuse" because we know that our seniors are not just abused physically, which is in the definitions, but economically—

"The deceiving of an older person in order to access the older person's economic or financial resources." Hugely harmful; never been tackled in the

country's history. This is cutting edge for what we have to deal with.

"Unreasonable deprivation of economic and financial resources which an older person requires out of necessity;

Behaviour which is intended to exercise coercive control over, exploit or limit an older person's economic and financial resources."

"Psychological or emotional abuse" are now defined in the Bill; **"...includes any verbal or non-verbal act that undermines the older person's sense of dignity or self-worth and threatens the older person's psychological well-being."** We've now given the department the powers to formally investigate.

Another wall to climb over is the cooperation with the department, because many times the department calls a non-profit organisation (NPO), a private entity, a public authority— knocking— and can't get the information that they need in order to help the senior. Those walls have to come down. Time is of the essence when you're dealing with a senior— that's the very nature of it. They've got less time than we do.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, unless you're nearing the end of your speech, I am proposing to take the luncheon adjournment now.

Mr. André M. Ebanks: I'm not near the end so if you're hungry, sir, proceed.

The Speaker: I'm not sure about hungry, but other things, so we'll take the luncheon adjournment and resume at 2.15.

Proceedings suspended at 1.05 p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 2.46 p.m.

The Speaker: Parliament is resumed. The honourable Member for West Bay South continuing his debate.

Mr. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think your instruction was for 2.15, but since we've passed that, I'm going to try to make this more concise, so that we can try to leave.

The Speaker: I see Monday coming.

Mr. André M. Ebanks: No; let me try to get out of that. Let me try to get out of that.

The only other point that I want to emphasise, even though I agree with all of the clauses of the Bill, which I really do hope persons take up, is the Older Persons Tribunal to be able to hear and determine complaints. That is now going to be part of the enforcement along with the other provisions that are actually

now offences, in terms of abuse and neglect of our seniors.

I hope that tribunal is one that is active, if it needs to be. If there isn't any abuse or neglect and it's bored, that's fine; but if there is, and people have to be brave enough to report, and as the responsible Minister pointed out, mandatory reporters are Members of Parliament. If you see it, call it out. Make the determination, because that's what that tribunal is there for: To add more teeth. Please use it, public, if you need it.

Very quickly, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to thank the persons who, especially moved this legislation forward. They were thanked already, but I do want to say it for myself.

As the Chair of the Older Persons Council, honourable Lucille Seymour. It was a pleasure engaging with the Council, it was a pleasure attending the meetings with the Council to actually see us move from what was concept and thought and to have legislation to debate on the Floor is no easy feat. You, your Deputy, Ms. Alice Mae Coe; and all the rest of the Council members, pass on my thanks. You, too, in particular, who were part of the legal steering committee that could connect the views of the Council with those on the legal steering committee, that's really where the magic happened.

The Chief Officer, Ms. Tamara Ebanks; the DCO, Trevor Gibbs; and all of the Ministry staff in the policy areas; all of the departments who also contributed. These provisions, as usual, are not easy to draft. Singling out Darlene Glidden and Ms. Cheryl Neblett for their legislative council expertise. We could not have done that, and these advanced provisions, without you.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, to close, and this will be a point that I will no longer have to make in relation to the Bills that will follow this debate, is to reemphasise the plea, in the next administration, in the next budget of 26-27, to prioritise social development. We don't critically examine population growth; number of persons becoming citizens; healthcare costs— not just how to pay for them, but the root causes. The Ministry staff can give the current Minister studies that show that it's not necessarily the health service that's the issue, it's the other stress on people— income security, social protections, living conditions. Those are what contribute to health problems.

We don't get serious about housing in the country; to look for those modular homes, to get planning to agree. Yes, there are procurement issues that surround housing repairs, but it's simple math. If the Transfer Payment (TP) is \$375[,000] and it's about \$50 grand to fix a home, that's seven homes, and even with the million that the current Honourable Premier found, that's twenty homes, because it's too expensive. We've got to be able to find a way to build in a more cost-effective way.

Agree those planning requirements. In some of these cases, the homes for our seniors are old wooden

houses that if it costs \$100 grand to fix, why don't we just knock it over and have a hurricane-rated modular home that actually lasts their lifetime and then could be passed on, [rather] than to go back to fix the same house again, three years later. If we don't look for those innovative solutions and wrap resources in the next budget around these pieces of legislation, we're going to be right back here with more cost over and over.

Thus, my point to the current Minister is not to knock any of the initiatives that he's going to try to do while the term remains. It's more so to say, that the Speaker knows what you're going through, trying to find those workarounds when he was the Minister. I know what you're going through to try to find the workarounds as the Minister; but the challenge for us, should we be re-elected, is to make social development a priority in the 26-27 Budget. It's not to knock it now. You'll get some things done but those are workarounds, they're not really wrestling the problem to the ground.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think we could all commend this legislation for our seniors with advanced protections and enhancements, and all the rest of the social package to this honourable House for passage. They're long overdue, but they'll need the resources in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The honourable Member for Bodden Town West.

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

[Pause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, in advance of my speech, I sent three documents to you. In the event that I may read from them, at least you would have copies in advance. Just in case.

The Speaker: Read selectively from them.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, not all of them; selectively. Sorry. Just in case I do.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my support to the amendments being made to the Older Persons Act. I want to thank the Member for West Bay South, and the Honourable Deputy Premier, [Member] for George Town Central for their contributions and efforts, so that this Bill could be presented to Parliament today.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the many public servants who worked with the elected representatives to, once again, move this ball down the field. As I said before, not every time you get on the field we are going to score a goal, but the most important thing is to keep the ball moving; keep the ball moving forward and

in a positive direction, so that we can improve the quality of life for our people.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to highlight a few areas that are important to me as we look at this Bill. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, is the shift in demographics.

Mr. Speaker as per the 2021 Census, the Caymanian population was 36,808 of which 12,790 persons were above the age of 50— that was three years ago. Another 1,400 should have at least reached 50 by now. I know, as I was one of them, to bring the total to 14,190 which, coincidentally, is in line with the statistics of the Elections Office as of the 1st October, 2024.

Mr. Speaker, since that census, we have added 2,647 persons to the Caymanian numbers. In 2021, we added 590 via grant of Caymanian Status; in 2022, the number was reduced to 523; in 2023, we further reduced the number down to 266— however, Mr. Speaker, in 2024 the number went up to 1,268, which brings the total amount of persons to 39,455. Again, that number is in line with the 39,897 reported in the 2024 Labour Force Survey done by the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO).

Mr. Speaker, the 2021 Census also highlighted three issues that we should be aware of:

1. The average age of the entire population was 44;
2. The average age of Caymanians was 40; and
3. The average age of non-Caymanians was 49.

I raise that issue to highlight the fact that there is a strong possibility that a vast number of status grants are being given to persons who are quite up in age. Three years ago, the average non-Caymanian was 49. What do we think it is today, three years later? I raise that issue to highlight the importance of the second area that I want to touch on, which is dignity.

Mr. Speaker, under the current law as it stands before these amendments, the word "dignity" is only mentioned twice in the entire legislation, and in both places, it is only in the interpretation section or, to the layman in the public, that is where we list all our definitions. However, this Amendment adds the word dignity three more times and, more importantly, it adds the word dignity in an area that deals with the function of what the Council is supposed to be focusing on: the dignity of our people.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about dignity I think the most important dignity that we can have, is financial dignity. That is, our people being able to look after themselves; and Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, when we were putting together the first budget after the election, and the Member for West Bay South touched on it earlier in his contribution, we saw where it was an aging trend. The government at the time recognised that, and started looking at what we could do, to basically make

our peoples' lives better recognising that we do have an aging population that was getting older.

Mr. Speaker, I have always spoken about it. The only way to grow an economy is to grow the middle class, and the two basic things that you need to grow the middle class are:

- Availability of credit; and
- Access to capital.

In other words, you give our people the tools where they can either form a business/start a business and, if need be, borrow to help; but for whatever reason, Mr. Speaker, there is a growing trend where we are focused on debt and worry about borrowings and, you hear it in different types of things as if debt is bad and so forth. Nothing is wrong with anyone going into debt; everyone has debt. People have mortgages, mortgage is debt, but is it bad to have a house? Does that make debt bad?

Mr. Speaker, we rightfully focus on the Government's credit standing but I beg to ask the question, *what's the use of having good credit if you're not using it?* Mr. Speaker, someone comes to you, you want to help them, and people are going hungry. *Man, I can't help you but if there's any good news I got good credit.* Mr. Speaker, people have nowhere to live but guess what, we have good credit. Mr. Speaker, people sleeping on the beach, doesn't matter, *you got good credit.* People can't afford food, gas or utilities but *we got good credit.*

Mr. Speaker, one of the things when in a previous political position, when I was tasked to do something about it as Minister of Finance, I approached the Caribbean Development Bank. We had meetings with them, they came to Cayman... I think I've sent the aide-mémoire to you. For the record, Mr. Speaker, I want to table this document to the House. I have extra copies here somewhere. I'm tabling this document, Mr. Speaker, because I want the Caymanian people to know that some of us were not asleep at the wheel. This was a memorandum that they sent us. I'm just going to touch on two brief points on it. One was the mission objective which states: to discuss and familiarise Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) staff with the development priorities and challenges faced by the Cayman Islands with a focus on:

- (a) Agriculture and food security;
- (b) Affordable and eco-friendly housing solutions, low income; and
- (c) Small business development.

The rest of the document, Mr. Speaker, speaks about other issues, and I just want to get down to Part 5 that basically speaks about strengthening the Cayman Islands Development Bank's (CIDB) mortgage provision. It says: CDB will finance a technical assistance project for a diagnostic review and restructuring of the CIDB and an appraisal report for a mortgage line of credit in the amount of US\$100 million to meet about

60 per cent of outstanding demand for housing by low to lower-middle income Caymanians. At that time, Mr. Speaker, we were negotiating a rate of about 4.75 per cent and the view was we were looking at our Caymanian population above the age of 60—coming up closer to the age of 65—who had mortgages. They would have a lot of equity built up and we knew interest rates were rising, and the plan was to borrow that money at 4.75 per cent and lend it to them at 5.25 per cent as opposed to the eight to 10 per cent some of them were paying. Thus, as people were getting ready to retire into their golden age, Mr. Speaker, we would have allowed our people to have basically borrowed against a much lower rate. We could have easily helped hundreds of families with this money.

Mr. Speaker, the part that was really the scariest of all in this, is that when you look at the Government's third quarter financial report which was tabled earlier this week, the impact of that US\$100 million on our net debt which was reported at 5.4 per cent would have been 10 per cent—and the law allows us to go to a maximum of 80 per cent. As of the 30th September, that number was 5.4 per cent and had we borrowed that money to help our people, Mr. Speaker, that net debt ratio would have moved to a whopping 10 per cent, still well below the 80 per cent allowed by law. Thus, I ask the question, what's the use of having good credit if we're not going to use the money to help our people?

Mr. Speaker, I want to give Jack his jacket. One of the best Motions that I've seen in this parliamentary session actually came from the Leader of the Opposition. I gave him his jacket when he spoke about one way of increasing the housing available to our people by offering government guarantees. That was something we looked at. I remember the night with the confusion with the vote because at the time it was being proposed, I don't think anyone understood the technical part of it thoroughly, in that, it was really a good Motion. I've said it to him—he was Deputy Leader of the Opposition then—that it was a good Motion, but this is what it is there for.

Mr. Speaker, I just want you to indulge me a little bit because there's one public servant I want to give credit to who we sometimes take for granted, and you mostly see this person at Finance Committee answering questions, and that is the Financial Secretary, Kenneth Jefferson.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for West Bay West would recall when he was over the barrel and the UK would not approve his budget without the framework for fiscal responsibility (FFR) being in place and he basically sent Mr. Jefferson off to the UK to go and negotiate the FFR. In fairness to Mr. Jefferson, when you read the Public Management and Finance Act and look at some provisions of the FFR, he did a pretty good job in giving us the room to help ourselves in many regards.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I will tell anyone why I like the current Premier is that she has a social conscience. She understands the struggles of people, the needs of people. At the end of the day, I think it's safe to say, understands that it makes no use of having good credit if you're not going to use it to help your people, I would say that much. Yesterday when we were looking at the same mortgage protection fund and ways in which we can help our people as they are getting closer to retirement, and the mortgage company, she said she was willing to find \$3 million to see what she can do to help with the housing, et cetera. I said, Premier, \$3 million? I'm actually looking for \$300 million because I want to do reverse mortgages. We cannot sit down and talk about these things of helping our people and giving them financial dignity without giving them access to capital and credit. The scary part about it, Mr. Speaker, if we were to go out and get the \$300 million to help our people, that 5.4 per cent net debt that we reported at the end of September would be increased to 21.9 per cent. Again, well below the 80 per cent limit. Then I ask the question again, what's the use of having good credit if we're not going to use it to help our people and give them their dignity? The only dignity you can have is financial dignity; and as I said, many times before, don't care what it is you want to do or how much you care, it still takes cash to care, not hope, not thoughts, not prayers; cash. That's what it takes and that is the only way in which we're going to help our people.

I go back to the Member for West Bay South when he came and made the case. At that time, the Government was running a deficit right after COVID, we knew things were tight, but we could not sit down at the time as the Government and not help the people who we knew needed help when we knew what the challenges were.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my Motion yesterday where I decided to use the term "2 per cent annual fee" on properties owned by foreigners, I knew at the time that that part wasn't going to fly but what I wanted the Caymanian public to understand when that part was rejected was simply this, foreigners are not going to be the persons paying for your health care. Clearly, it is something that we will now have to find a way to pay for ourselves. If we are going to sit down and help our people meaningfully as they get older to have their dignity, then we need to start putting the tools in place to help our people. That is pretty much what we want to get down to.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I want to touch on. Just about every time we have a parliamentary session, we are tabling reports but 99.9 per cent of those reports have one thing in common—and the Member for George Town East would understand what I'm talking about. What reports do is report on what happened. There is nothing that anyone can do to go back and change what is in those reports because it is something

that has already happened. However, what we can do when we read those reports is learn from those reports and try to predict the future.

Last year, Mr. Speaker, when I brought the Motion to set up the Fuel Select Committee, I remember clearly saying to the Members of this honourable House that the Arab world decided it wasn't riding with Biden and they would jack up the fuel prices over the summer to make sure everyone feels it, get ticked off by the government, and vote the Democrats out. When you saw people in the US complaining about their light bills in the summer, and my cousin in Coconut Creek, Miami whose mortgage payment did not increase one bit despite eight interest rate rises, didn't complain one bit about her mortgage; she was complaining about her light bill. She joined millions of people in the Caribbean and elsewhere who were screaming about their light bills last summer. We knew it was coming, we set up the Committee to maybe do a few things to get ahead of it; it didn't happen. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say again, why I'm pushing and belabouring this issue. If there's one thing that our people have come with a history of knowing "*if I did know*".

Well, Mr. Speaker, the other thing I want to put out there is this one I sent to you and it says: "**U.S. October budget deficit jumps to \$257 billion, handing hole to Trump**".

Mr. Speaker, the start of the US financial year is October 1st, it runs from October 1st to September 30th. I just want to read this first part from Reuters. It says, "**The U.S. budget deficit jumped nearly four-fold to \$257 billion in October, a figure inflated by one-off factors, the Treasury Department said on Wednesday in a report that started off a new fiscal year with a big hole to be turned over to President-elect Donald Trump in January. The Treasury said the October deficit was up 287 per cent from the \$67 billion deficit in October 2023, but calendar adjustments in benefit payments had cut that month's deficit nearly in half**".

The first month in the United States government's fiscal year, they started off with \$257 billion deficit. Why am I raising that point? Mr. Speaker, we always look at the federal funds rate (Fed rate) and the rate that the Federal Reserve (the Fed) pays the different banks when they are moving the Fed rate, and that's the rate we look at.

However, there's another market out there, Mr. Speaker, which also has an impact on that market, and that is the US government. The US government also goes out and buys bonds to fund their deficit to basically meet their needs. When the US government needs to go out and buy these kinds of bonds that means that there is an increase in demand, and we all know that when demand goes up, prices and interest rates go up.

This brings me, Mr. Speaker, to the last document that I sent your way, and the headline reads:

“How China Could Weaken the US Dollar”. China, Mr. Speaker, did something last month that they have not done in quite a while and in the interest of time, I won't read it but I will make it available to Members. Basically, what it did was, China decided to go out and issue a bond, but they did not issue a bond in their currency. They actually issued a bond in US dollar currency. In other words, China is now competing directly with the US government in terms of buying bonds, and the location that China used to actually raise that bond was Saudi Arabia. Again, why is that important? I won't get into the petrodollar, but for those of you who are familiar, I've spoken about the petrodollar issue already; that is something that is there. However, in a nutshell, they are looking to put a hurting on the US economy in terms of making it more expensive for the US government to go out and borrow money. What do you think is going to happen to interest rates when it is most difficult for the US government now to have to compete with China for money? It means there's a possibility that rates may go up. Will it happen? I don't know what Trump is going to do because I don't think anyone knows what Trump is going to do; but the question that we need to be focused on is, what are we going to do?

Are we going to say to our people as they are getting ready to retire now that we're going to have another trade war in the US, interest rates may end up going up, all kind of issues may happen. What's going to happen to their monthly payments and other commitments? Are we willing to put our people at risk? Are we going to sit down and say, *boy we can't do anything because this is the way things are*, when we know we can do things from now? This is what it is about. It is safe to say now, while we may refer to this now as an older persons Bill, we might as well call it a national Bill because with the aging population that we have, this is us. This isn't a young people country, this is an older people country, this is us; and this Bill needs to make sure that we have the dignity.

The Member for West Bay West talked about it when he said that he realised what he was preparing for is where he reached now. How many of us think we are far behind? Do we think we are insulated?

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Members for West Bay South, and George Town Central, the Honourable Deputy Premier, my good friend; for bringing this issue forward. I am asking us, please, for the love of Christ, let us not just go through another exercise of getting things done. Let us use the information that we have and really start to put the tools in place that our people need. I'm going to tell you straight up Economics 101, the only people who really pay taxes in a country are the middle class; poor people don't pay it because they can't afford to pay it and rich people don't pay it because they own all the businesses and all they do is put it in their prices because taxes are a cost of doing business. It is part of the price package for them

that ultimately we, the people, pay when we buy the goods.

This, again, is a step in the right direction. As I said, we are not going to score a goal every time we go on the field but our objective of this Parliament is to move the ball forward. I recognise we're coming to the end of this parliamentary session; probably about another eight weeks or so if that much. For those who are coming again to seek re-election and for those who are out there looking to get here, I'm going to tell you right now, the Caymanian people want tangible solutions, they want actions. The most important thing that we can do, recognising that government itself is not the solution to every problem, is to give our people the tools to make sure that they can live with the dignity that they deserve.

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]

If no other Member wishes to speak, I call on the Mover of the Bill to exercise his right of reply.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier, Minister of Tourism & Ports and Social Development & Innovation, Elected Member for George Town Central:
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was wondering if we were ever going to get out of here today, but I'm glad that we've had much contribution to this very important Bill and that all the contributions thus far are all in alignment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Leader of Opposition, the former Minister, the good Member for Bodden Town West, but most importantly, my Parliamentary Secretary, Member for West Bay West for their contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important before I try to address some of the points of each particular contribution on the Bill, to suggest that the overall discussion today has been on the implementation of programmes and support and financing or labour infrastructure for the delivery of what the expected standard should be that we offer the good people of the Cayman Islands. However, this Motion is about the legislative process. Before I go on, I want to say how happy I am to—if there is such a thing as to benefit from the unfortunate departure of my former government colleagues, in that, I've gotten the opportunity to get to know a group of people who are super awesome; I cannot stress that enough. They are a pretty cool squad. Sometimes I ask myself the question: Member for West Bay South, how could you leave such an amazing squad? Honestly, they are wonderful and I can understand why the fabric of this legislation has been furnished with so much focus on protection and support of our older persons.

I will get to the supporting stakeholders like Ms. Alice Mae Coe, Ms. Lucille Seymour and all those who helped with this a little bit later on, but I thought I would just take the opportunity to highlight that. Though this is about the legislative structure and the policy directives, much of today's and Wednesday's discussion has been about the end product, which is the departmental level and the financial assistance to deliver programmes.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition—I'm seeing my words here that I wrote down—I couldn't agree with you more. He pointed out all the relevant things that we in the Government, both the remaining Members of Government and I'm certain those who recently left, the feel that we get in the community, the want for a more hands-on approach from both the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) as well as the Department of Financial Assistance (DFA) because of the complexities of how our society has been developed, whether it's persons who don't have the ability for technology or the capabilities of understanding complex documents, having records being able to get from one place to the other; we need to be more hands on to make sure we can offer the assistance to the people who we work so hard for and the people who have created the amazing economy and society that we have today because it's on their backs, their sweat, blood and tears that allows us today and our children, their grandchildren and great grandchildren to be offered with the amazing amenities that our social society has now.

I want to speak specifically to the Leader of Opposition and his points. Some of the things that he highlighted were: the fact that there needs to be a reform and modernisation of DCFS, and more community officers are needed to be more available in the community. I agree with him wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, at this moment in the Department of Children and Family Services, I'm embarrassed to say this, but we only have one manager and four social workers in the Elderly Services Unit for the whole country. Now, I know those persons can never possibly deliver the needs and the quality that we believe here in this Parliament that they should get with the population that we have. I know we have heard about the population growth and we also have heard about the expected retiree numbers in the near future. Thus, the Members are all correct and were in unison about ensuring that we start to prioritise social support financially, morally, programme wise, staffing wise and [with the] expansion of various legislation.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard the former Minister talk about legislation that was in the works when he was there, and I am happy to report that I've been advised it is still in the works, where it fills the other gaps, other than the elderly and the children, which is those who are with disabilities and those who are within the adult support system from over 18 to before 65 because there are people who are vulnerable

who need support in that bracket. Just to give the Parliament an example of that, someone leaving prison, what do they do after they leave prison? How do they get the support from a rehabilitation process? What do we do to assist them if they don't have a place to live or moral support to keep their mental capacity in the right, positive place to reduce the rate of recidivism? Mr. Speaker, these other pieces of legislation will come in the future and I'm proud to say that the Department, the Ministry and the support staff are already working on that.

Mr. Speaker, the other area of concern from the Opposition Leader were the challenges of the DFA and more officers needed to be on the road, as well as the promotion of reporting contact information for all persons when they're in need—and he's right, sometimes people don't know where to go.

I was saying to myself earlier, and I'm happy that my team says there is actually promotional information already in the department of DFA on how to go about getting assistance; but it seems that we are not doing a very good job of letting the public know about it, so that will take some working together. The public relations, which is my area of expertise, Mr. Speaker, [and] how we do better at public relations so persons [know], if they find themselves in need, what process they need to go through because, Mr. Speaker, asking for assistance is a very sensitive thing.

Unfortunately, you have some people who have been a part of the system all through their life, their parents were born into it. Like me, when I was a kid, I always knew about social services and a social worker because, unfortunately, I grew up on a more difficult side of the fence, so it was nothing to speak to social services, but there are some people in the world who came from a middle-class or upper-class society [for whom], unfortunately, life has changed and the morality or the sensitivity to go, *"Oh my God, I now have to ask for help"*, is a very emotive thing. They are already in a place of almost shame to ask because it's almost as if there's a level of failure to ask for help, so you have to be there to help them and reach your hand out to them first and say, *"Don't worry, it's okay. It's okay. That's why you pay your taxes. That's why your country is here for you. I will be here to help you. Come on, it's okay. We all get down some times, and it's going to be all right. We're here for you, and we're gonna make sure that you get the support you need until you get yourself back on your feet."*

However, most people feel as if when you're asking, it is almost like you're begging, and we got to change that narrative, but the narrative can't be changed overnight because it takes more support to be willing to give. You heard the honourable Member for Bodden Town West talk about it takes cash to care. That's why I'm so happy to hear him say that he's willing to support any administration, and this administration for further borrowing because he's right, it makes no

sense to have a whole pile of credit if you're not willing to spend it to take care of your people and I can't say, Mr. Speaker that...

Sometimes politics do get in the way, because we will sit here and say, "*Where is your financial management of the people's money?*", and that we're borrowing too much, but you hear the honourable Member say that we have an extra 75 per cent worth of credit limit. Now by all means, I'm not saying go into debt just for going into debt's sake, but if we sit here and recognise that the social welfare problems that we are having are not being adequately supported, why are we not willing, because it's going to be costly. No doubt about that. For one reason or another we have not accepted the true reality of the needs of our people, and they have been left behind. We have. We have.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I heard the honourable Member say something but I didn't hear him.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: The honourable Member was making a minor joke there to add the fact, "but we got good credit" and it makes no sense.

Mr. Speaker, I am 44 years old, and, unfortunately, what I have seen in my 44 years is that we have turned this small island state into a modern society, and didn't bring along the social structure and fibre and legislation— and will— along with a modern society, and then we are surprised when we see these social ills pop up before us.

If you look at any modern society, they have proper social housing, they have various departments, they have much legislation, from all the ones that we're bringing here now, to the ones that we'll be bringing soon. We always pride ourselves to be a first-world nation, but are not willing to put the first world dollar figure next to it— and Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity.

For those who are listening to these proceedings, I appreciate you doing your part to watch the democratic process, we are here to work for you; but the truth is the Department of Children and Family Services and the DFA get too many licks unnecessarily.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: I will be honest with you. I don't know if I could do it. I couldn't work in their department. I couldn't do it, because they are asked to do something that takes \$10, but they're only given \$1, and then we expect to say, "*Our people deserve more.*" Well, spend more, then! Spend more.

That's why you see, I had to bring a directive to this honourable House on Tuesday suggesting that, even if we have to pay for hotel rooms, if a mother and her children, or a father and his children are homeless, well so be it, pay for it.

While others have come to our country and we, too— not only foreigners, but we have those who have gotten the benefit of the strong economy. Nice house, gated community, fancy BMW, big paycheck... I am one of them. Things are good for me; the Lord has blessed me and this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: I got a truck, you're right. I *ain't* got that much. One Ford truck, and it is a 2013. Thank you for highlighting that, Mr. Bush.

My point is, how do you think our people feel when the billion-dollar economy that we have, the perception that this is "*Oh, the little island in the Cayman Islands that is so nice, so pretty, good infrastructure*", while the indigenous people whom we are here to serve are usually the ones who are hurting the most, you know?

I'm not saying the new Caymanians are not hurting too, but the ones who hurt the most are the indigenous ones— the ones who used to slap the mosquitoes to make sure that we implemented dirt roads, implemented the light poles, and the docks to create the little Caribbean Island where they built the banks first. Those people have been left behind.

We talk about it. We talk about bringing technology in and we know people don't have the reading capacity to do so, but they are obligated to go online and sign up. What that means, then, [is] we have to support the department and say, "*You know what? Our people ain't there yet because we grew so fast, that we still have some people who grew up in outside pit holes*"; so you can't tell those persons to go do XY and Z to get services. After a level of frustration from the different departments— [because], you don't think they're frustrated with the barrage of, "I need help, I need help, I need help"? You have people who are doing the work of ten people, because we haven't supported them. It is time to spend on Caymanians now.

We talk about community makes country— and I'm not picking on the former Premier, I'm just using the example of the statement. It wasn't specific, wasn't a political jab. We talk about the quality of life for our people, but we won't spend the money necessary.

I feel embarrassed when I go to the UK. When I hear Caymanians go and get loans to get a ticket, just to get to the UK because they are going to get help, because they know that they can go to their social welfare system. They know that someone is going to fight [so] that they get a job, they are going to have a roof

over their head, their children [are] going to be registered in school and have a good school uniform and they're going to be okay. Most of the time, you know why they come back? They miss home, not because they weren't getting the help, but because they miss home. We are a British Overseas Territory and they have a strong social support system; but we don't have it.

You know, something that bothers me, Mr. Speaker? Everyone talks about, "*Oh, this is what they do in the United Kingdom, this law, that law*"—and I am not going to bring up the law that I'm thinking about; I'm going to leave that one out today, but you bring this rule and that rule over there, but when it comes to the quality of service to people, no one is shouting and screaming.

I hear the Law Reform Commission talking about human rights and this is what we are obligated to in the UK and about another piece of legislation—which is going to be very controversial shortly, I can promise you that. They pick up on such legislation, but they don't pick up on legislation that affects the quality of life for our people.

An Hon. Member: True.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Everyone talks about the strong economy of financial services and tourism. Where are the marches for the quality of life for our people? I hear groups talking about the environment and don't do this road. Where is the group fighting for the homeless? Where are they?

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say this Bill is about the legislative structure of things. I want to thank the former Deputy Premier, he was a stakeholder in that process. We are merely baton members carrying the journey of our development forward. The truth is, the people whose names are supposed to be in the record books about these types of legislation and modernisation are not Mr. Andre Ebanks nor Mr. Kenneth Bryan. It's supposed to be the Chief Officer, the Deputy Chief Officer, policy advisors, the tribunal, the advocates, stakeholders, they're the ones who are supposed to be taking the credit. Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to talk about the amazing team—I'm going to go off track, I'm all over the place and then my team says, "Minister, you're not on track" but, I will get all the points out, eventually.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet some very smart, intelligent young people. I wish I had them for 3.5 years. Boy, I would have been clicking. I had a good team in Department of Tourism (DOT) though, and in the Ministry. Miss Ashlyn, I won't even bother to pronounce the last name because I'm going to mess it up.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Goubault-Ebanks; Ms. Melissa Smith, Ms. Sharrel Jackson, Shennique Seales and Mehr... Oh! Mehr, no, I'm not going to mess up your last name.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: I'm not going to do that. Mr. Trevor Gibbs, Deputy Chief-Officer; awesome dude. Everybody loves Ms. Tamara. She's just one of the sweetest Caymanians in the civil service.

This squad cares Mr. Speaker. I'm not asking you that. I'm telling you they care because I'm a straight shooter and I've challenged them, and I see it in their heart. I see it in their eyes and that's a strong squad—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: To bring this part of things. This is only one equation. This is the legislative equation, and they've done a good job and the former Minister did his part to support them, to get them to drafting, to get it to Cabinet. Cabinet did its part. I am now here taking over the baton to get it here, but that's the upper level.

You can have all the laws you want, the people are not going to feel the law. They need to feel the money, they need to feel the programme, they need to feel the support. This law is about protections. Protecting, creating the legislative framework. It's not about the application of support, and that's what everyone in here was talking about over the last two days. It is about the application of support.

Thus, Mr. Speaker, outside of the former Minister who spoke about some specific parts in the Bill, most of it has been about what we haven't done and what we need to do and I'm in full agreement, so as I said earlier today, and I think in previous debate, I think most of us are going to come back. There are many people out there who want our seats. I'm not sure if they all understand the commitment, the hard work, it took for you to get in this room, but some of them are going to learn. I thought I knew it all too, when I first ran, right?

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, you know what I'm talking about. I thought I knew it all too, and many of them will come and that's part of the learning process. That has to happen because the next group of leaders has to come, right; but I believe most of us are going to be back.

What I recognise, and I'm happy about it, Mr. Speaker, is most of us accept that we have not done enough for those who are most vulnerable. We can't continue to brag and boast about how wonderful the Cayman Islands are when we are not willing to spend the money that is necessary to take care of those who

are most vulnerable. We can't. We should be ashamed, ashamed. Let me read that part again. It makes me want to cry, honest to God. One manager and four social workers for 84,000 people. You think, that they can care for our seniors, and that's the department that we support? Come on, man.

Mr. Speaker, we do have to strengthen our commitment and it has to come down to money because no matter how you check it, it costs. It's costly in this jurisdiction. It costs for staff; the labour it takes to pay people to do this work. It costs to put buildings in various districts, we know what the cost of building is. It takes costs to give support to the Department of Financial Assistance because Cayman is expensive.

The whole notion— and this is a little something for the news to come up. I will be examining that \$3,000 limit; because I want to know who is surviving on \$3,000 in Cayman with the quality standard that we expect, and the department is suggesting that if you make more than \$3,000 we can't help you.

I mean, my light bill, and I have my wife and my two children, is \$1,000— and I have the most efficient AC unit. I got insulation, I got everything that you can think of to try to be energy efficient because after the Member for Newlands came in, he made sure everyone in our group was [energy] efficient. Efficient light bulbs, efficient this and efficient that. It was all he talked about, so—

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: I went and fixed my house... Light bill still the same.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Just take a common family, or God forbid you're single and you got three children. How?! I mean, we got to fix the cost of living. It's not as easy as 1-2-3, but until we figure out what we're going to do about it, how can we justify saying that if you make more than \$3,000, we can't give you a dollar to help? I mean, that Mr. Speaker, is an example of what we're talking about with the lack of support. All right, let me get off the soap box and get back to the concerns raised.

Mr. Speaker, I was talking about the concern of public relations and the sharing of information. The Department of Financial Assistance does have a video they created trying to explain, for those people who are first timers, because it is a very sensitive thing— I think I went off track from there and never got back to it— about how to apply.

What are the common things a person would apply for?

- I cannot pay my rent. Can I get rental assistance?
- Can I get assistance for light and water, or food, or medicine, insurance?
- How do I go about doing it?

To be honest with you, the true need of help for the elderly, as well as those who are vulnerable for one reason or another, should be a constant thing. It's sad. It might reflect how many people actually need it, but we need to get it out there to also let the public know, *"if you need help, this is a place where you can go to get it"*.

This is a video that explains how to do it because we have online services, or here's a telephone number like what the Leader of Opposition said, that they can call and somebody will always answer on the other side, because to be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, it is an emergency. Somebody has got to be able to answer, because the people whom we are serving— not all of them; most of them who actually need the help are usually not functional in technological advancements.

I remember my mother. Before she got into the smartphone she said, *"Kenneth, you're Instagramming and Facebooking? You Facebooking, eh?"* And I said, *"Mommy, you want me to get you one of them touch-screen phones?"* She said, *"Nope. All I want is a phone with the green button and the red button and the 0 to 9."*

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: However, I tricked her one Christmas and bought her a smartphone and said, *"Well, mommy, I am not giving you any other phone."* Then we got her hooked up with Facebook and WhatsApp— and it has been downhill ever since; can't get her off now, but not everybody is there, Mr. Speaker.

If there is one Caymanian who doesn't understand that space, they should not be disenfranchised in any capacity, from having that hand reach out to them and say, *"Hey, Caymanian, you worked hard, this is your land and we're going to be here for you. You don't have to always be technologically advanced, because we cover everybody. Here you go"*— but we can't say that hand is out now, not when you only have one manager and four social workers. That's why they can't be out in the community.

We can't ask DCFS and the support team to go and look for the seniors in every neighbourhood if we're not willing to staff them; we can't ask DFA to process these payments quicker, if each individual is doing the workload of four persons; and we can't ask them to give up money if we are not willing to fund them with the money for the level of need that is out there. It just simply has to be supported financially.

Mr. Speaker, I apologise, I'm just trying to get myself in order here. What else was he saying? Oh, the Housing Repair Programme.

Mr. Speaker, I think that my very capable Parliamentary Secretary (PS) highlighted it tremendously, and it has to do with those seniors. I don't want to make it seem like I'm going too off track, but most of the conversation was so wide scope for social development rather than just the Older Persons Bill, that I'm forced to respond to all the comments. He is 100 per cent right.

I think the Honourable Leader of Opposition and the PS for the Ministry highlighted the words, bureaucracy and hurdles, and I've got to admit they are 100 per cent right, because by the time you get the approval to fix someone's House, you probably spent the same amount of money checking to see if you can spend the money on what you need to spend the money on. I mean, time is money, and this is more of an internal thing because what has transpired, Mr. Speaker, and I have wanted to vent this for a long time so let me get it out.

What I saw had happened in this country over the last three decades, is there seemed to be a transition from an old practical system of just get it done, the old Caymanian way, the older politicians the likes of Mr. Bush, Truman Bodden, Jim Bodden and the older ones who were here before me. The old [civil] service was, *[snapping fingers]* "Boy, the Minister says get it done, you get it done." That's how it used to be. Then somebody with this magical idea said, "Oh, you can't allow a politician to be involved in that. We need to have these checks and balances in place because of political corruption."

Now, granted, I'm not saying that that's not the case, that such couldn't be happening, but you put so much bureaucracy in place, that now you can't get anything done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: On the thought that you got to put these things in place just to prevent— well, not just to prevent, because you got to stop politicians. Any crooked politician that you can catch, lock them up! Throw away the key, too, but you have to be practical with your ability to give the support to the people in a timely process.

When I think about the housing situation— and unfortunately, I'm just starting to get accustomed to what we do from a social housing support system because we have a TP for that, but I already got debriefed on that and God knows, that's just as bad as the other process. Thank God the Minister for affordable housing has made sure to try to loosen up some of the hurdles that were in the way for him to actually get some houses done, because he was screaming about it the whole time.

[When] helping the elderly, you have to get 15,000 quotes, you have to analyse the quotes, give them a point system for the quotes, then you have to send that to the Ministry to get the approval for the quotes. Then you got to find out when the worker is ready to do the work, and God forbid if you don't get it done in time to get it approved when he's actually available to do the work, because he was working on another contract— and then, before you know it, the person dead. You don't need to fix the house again. Now, you hear any foolishness like that?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, we have to do better than that if we care, and you know what? I hope to be a part of the next administration. Mr. Speaker, with the Lord's blessings, the goodwill of the George Town Central people, and other Members, I hope to be back here and I hope to be on this side.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: [Member for North Side], did you hear that? He said he wants me, you, [the Members for East End] and Mr. Bush and everybody come over one time.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I hope that whoever comes back to this honourable House is willing to stand up, not against, you know, stand up to any of this bureaucracy and change it; and that includes if we have to speak to the Deputy Governor, who responds to the Governor, because most of this stuff, I heard that we actually created ourselves, to be honest with you; but we need to cut it out, because we're not helping our people. We can't get to them.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Yeah, well. Follow them, follow them. Tell you one thing, if somebody jumps off a bridge, I know I'm not jumping off with them.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can get that resolved and I want to give those who are already in the application process of getting repairs for seniors within the Ministry's Housing Programme the comfort of knowing this: I'm doing my hardest to try to get through the hurdles they have in the way, and I have a very strong PS behind me, who doesn't take any BS, even though he's my PS, to try to get some stuff done before the dissolution of this House. There is a very short period of time, but hopefully we can get it done.

Mr. Speaker, I heard about the availability of housing for seniors in their golden years and we talked about Golden Age homes and so forth. He is right. That's probably one of my biggest concerns because I go back to my age, 44, and I am certain, that I remember seeing The Pines [Retirement] Home when I was probably about nine when I used to live in Windsor Park, so The Pines has been there that long.

I know they did a little addition onto it, but it wasn't much, and the population was probably about 40 something thousand, maybe 50,000 back in the late eighties, early nineties, so you can tell that, either intentionally or unintentionally, we are not planning for the growth that we're getting. I must say that it has to be unintentionally, because I don't know how this population got to 85,000, 86,000 so quickly. I swear, I remember coming into politics and the Speaker of the House, who was then the Premier, was saying we were using the figure of 65,000 and we've increased by a third— How did it happen? I don't even know; it happened in the blink of an eye, and it doesn't sound good because I'm a part of a government that has been in power for the last 3.5 years—but it's happened. We hear the projections of how many people are going to need help from the honourable Member for Bodden Town West and that we're going to need more senior care facilities, whether privately or government, and I think it's time to start incentivising.

Let me tell you something, children who are in their middle age are normally the ones who start to take care of their parents as they get older. The kids of this modern time are no longer buying big houses where, *"Mom and dad, come live with me,"* because what you have today coming up is more modern Caymanians. *"We don't need all of that land, we're not planting any mango trees or suckers or anything like that,"* which—boy, if you can do that, if you're listening, do it, because food security is a real thing.

Most of them are more modern, they're looking at apartments. They don't have the space. Two bedroom, small living room because they're never at home anyway, they're always working, and they're always out. They don't have any space for the old school Caymanian way where we had a spare room, a big piece of land, and your grandmother stayed with you. She's always outside underneath the tree, planting this or picking that or going at the flowers. There's no space for the family home as the modern Cayman develops, so there's going to be a need for more elderly care facilities.

Not only that, the burden of cost for mature adults to take care of their family in their senior age is becoming so burdensome that they can't be around to do it because they're working three jobs. Then they're forced to come to social services and say, *"boy, can you put my mom in Golden Age Home or can you put them in the Pines?"* But we don't have the space.

I think the PS was 100 per cent right about the lack of senior care facilities in the country, and we have to do a better job of either building some... The government can't do everything, I know that, but we can do incentives. Matter of fact, what was Mr. Seymour's mother's name? I think there was a—

[Inaudible interjection]

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

[Cross talk]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: There's a Caymanian who has been successful in his own right, congratulations to him, and wanted to build a seniors care facility in the name and in honour of his mother. We should be *begging* him to build that right now.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Matter of fact, we are supposed to be giving him duty waivers and incentives as much as we possibly can so he can do it right away. Matter of fact, we are about five years behind on the need for the care. But no, you know what we do? I'm going to tell you what we do—and the Members who left, *unna* know what I'm talking about. The only people who are going to get out of this is the Opposition. We make *hurdles* in the way so that people can't do it. *Unna* know what I'm talking about.

An Hon. Member: Yup.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: They're supposed to be already started by now. That's what we do. I hope I am a part of a Government that has the *cojones* to stand up and say *this gah get done* next time around, instead of chatter-chatter. Anyway, let me stop there with that one.

Mr. Speaker, I agree that we have to have a better working relationship in respect of services of care. This is another thing that the honourable Leader of the Opposition and the honourable Parliamentary Secretary spoke about in respect of getting care for health. You hear the PS talk about CINICO saying, *"well, you got to pay for the insurance first or pay for the medication first and then we can reimburse you,"* when you are asking for the help for the insurance in the first place, so where are you going to get the money to pay for the medication?

Now, I do accept and I'll give this honourable House the commitment as Minister that I will be looking at this regime because I saw the problem from before, even with the former Minister of Health, the concern of the relationship between CINICO, HSA DFA and DCFS. Now that relationship's *nuh workin' good* and it's supposed to be seamless.

You go into DFA to apply to see if you qualify from a financial perspective to see if you're deserving of it, then we need to send it to the hospital for the hospital to decide whether you get it, and then you have to send it to CINICO to get it approved, and then CINICO doesn't tell the DFA that it's approved. By time the person has called back, called back, called back to find out if it was approved, half the insurance gone.

An Hon. Member: Yeah.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: You know how often I've heard that? That by the time it's approved or by time the information gets back to the applicant who's been approved for insurance, you've basically wasted three months of premiums. It's ludicrous!

I can promise you I've given the directive to my Deputy Chief Officer, who I must say is a very strong, capable person; I don't think I've given him a task yet that he hasn't completed. I'll explain the hotel thing to you, former Minister, shortly and it's because of that good man. I have given him the indication that that's one of the areas that we have to address, because you know what? DFA is getting the licks for it, DCFS also gets licks for it when sometimes it has nothing to do with them at all, and I feel bad.

I honestly remember sometimes I called the DFA myself and said, *"What do you mean to tell me, man, this application has been in four months and you can't tell them if they've got insurance or not?"* They were true professional civil servants, *"Yes Minister, we're working on it. We're just waiting on some other approvals,"* blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Come to find out the hold-up was by HSA. HSA didn't want to approve it.

Anyway, I think we're *gonna* fix that. I think that's something we can functionally fix. It could be complicated, I don't know, but we're going to dive into it. Unfortunately, with all this new responsibility, plus tourism and Christmas and campaigning...huh.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Boy, they left me in a— I don't know if it was a set up. They probably did this so I can have more work so they can campaign against me, I don't know, but I promise to address that.

Mr. Speaker, the former Minister highlighted that maybe as the Minister for Tourism, I was able to get something accomplished through the hotels to allow the Department of Financial Assistance to find a place for persons who are vulnerable with children in emergency circumstances. I had nothing to do with it, so it's nothing to do with me. The former Minister said it was difficult. I'm assuming he was informed—because I know he's not out there going to the hotels himself—that the hotels weren't willing to do that then.

Maybe it's just by happenstance that now that I'm Minister there are hotels that want to do it. I want to put that in perspective, because I don't want to make it seem like he wasn't doing something and I did something different. What I was made to understand is the reputation of DFA, better known as NAU, with the hotels isn't the best—for a number of reasons, not necessarily for the fault of the working people within the DFA, nothing to do with them, but because of the clients and the history of persons doing damage to property and so forth. They didn't want to deal with payments from there.

I think it's because of the hard work of my Deputy Chief Officer and that the request for assistance came from the Ministry level, where the Minister said, *"Listen, we're gonna pay for this, we're gonna get this thing done,"* because the mandate was under my watch. I don't *wanna* hear, I don't *wanna* see *one* story in any news that when Kenneth Bryan was the Minister of Social Development that any child was homeless on his watch! I know what it felt like, Mr. Speaker, I know what it's like to be homeless and it *ain't gon'* happen on my watch. We're going to pay for it. My Deputy Chief Officer understood the directive and got it done.

Here's a solution that I have and here's where my discrepancy is, and I think I share a different view from the former Minister. We recognised that the hotels weren't willing to give rooms to people who are getting services from NAU, now known as the DFA. We know that people were having problems finding homes, either based on the fact of the reputation, or didn't want children, or the housing market was limited. We know that. What did we do about it?! Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but that falls squarely on the Minister's lap, because here's what Kenneth Bryan is currently doing and will do.

Immediately, if we have to go and rent 10 apartments—remember now there's a difference between transitional apartments and someone renting for six months or a year. These are rooms, even if they have to be empty, waiting for someone to be homeless, so be it; but that way we don't have the expense of the hotel which is \$300-500 per night. It goes into the ratio of cost perspective. You go get a block of them, and that is a transition.

We can see it almost every other week, there will be an application to DFA, *"I nuh gah' no place to go,"* and there's a process of needing to find a place and there's always at least two [weeks] to a month worth of time before they find a place. What do we do? Let's take out the children for a minute. What about a woman, you want her sleeping on the road? You know what, I've heard of women actually starting to unfortunately give up their *bodies* to be able to survive in this country because of how hard it is. Hm. Sad.

However, my point is Mr. Speaker, to solve the transitional problem. I know that there is work that the former Minister and the Ministry team were working on with John Silver's—very complicated, and there are

other government properties, but I don't believe in excuses.

You know the problem is there, you know the sensitivities of children sleeping, *find it*. I don't want [an] excuse. If you have to build a container, make sure that they are safe; because nobody wants to hear the excuses when you heard that a mother and two children were sleeping on the beach because they had nowhere else to go and a predator came and raped them and kill them. What are they going to say to them after that?

When we are given the constitutional responsibility by Order of the Governor: on behalf of the King you are now responsible for Social Development; I take that role very seriously. We're obligated to find a solution, and if you don't have the money come down here and say, "Madam Minister of Finance, I need money," and I know she gives it to him. When he came the last time he got \$100 million worth.

Was it \$100 million? I need to quote that figure correctly, but I know the majority of the money went to his request, so it's not like she didn't support him every time he asked. A matter of fact, the last sitting of Finance [Committee] that we had in here, most of the money was going to that Ministry, so it's not like the solution couldn't be found. There should be no reason for there to have been a story on the headlines. We should have had somewhere for the person to stay. Anyway, I'm done with that one. I wanted to get that one off my chest.

All right, Mr. Speaker, the former Minister also highlighted the point of agreeing that there needs to be social housing and that we have our differences of opinion from way before, when he was a Chief Officer and I was in Opposition, about how to do social housing. Whether to do them collectively, which I am in support of because it's a holistic way where there are other services that come with persons who have the need for social housing who usually have some other social issues as well, whether it's counselling, it's job search officers, social worker, whatever it is, all could be housed in one location.

Well, you heard the honourable former Minister say that there are problems that come with that. I think it's the thinking of not putting too many people in one location that comes with some of the social ills, and I think the term that they try to use is not to create ghettos or slums or whatever they want to call it. However, I believe Mr. Speaker, we do not have the luxury, from a financial position, to create social housing all over the place. The cost of land alone...look at Town.

I'm a George Towner, we have social housing problems in George Town. Are we expected to build 20 different locations across Town or better yet, would it not make more sense to say we're going to buy a two-acres lot and build a three-story apartment complex that has 52 bedrooms in it that is owned by the government, and is managed through a social structure framework of transition housing or need for a period of time

or qualifications that if you're staying here, you have to be registered for work and all of these other systems, like the United Kingdom does? I know it's going to be cheaper to do it that way.

Thus, yes, we do disagree in that approach. The other part about it, Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity within this term to purchase some of those options. I recall where there was an option for us to purchase, I think it was 50, if my memory serves me, but one block out there by—what do they call the big apartments on Esterly Tibbetts?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: The Lakeside! Those came up for sale. Thank you very much, Member for Savannah, 100 blocks; so we had a number of options available to us. If we had those available, I am almost certain if we had bought them—you hear the good Member for Bodden Town West talk about how we have all this credit and we should use it; buy it! I know it would be cheaper than the cost [to rent] because I tell you one thing, some of the places that I see them renting for \$1,200-\$1800, I wouldn't even pay them seven cents to live in them. Nonetheless, people are forced to live in them. I think it's...I'll leave that there.

Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the importance of finding more affordable housing solutions as the Member for West South said, I agree, but I know this, it's not because the Honourable Minister of Housing isn't trying. Now, I can't say... I wasn't in government when the former Minister of Housing was there, my good friend and cousin, Honourable Joseph Hew, but I can tell you I have witnessed Johany Ebanks' hard work in Planning. I almost see him getting in fights with the DG about bureaucracy. You've seen him express himself in this Parliament. I know he has a reputation in the Cayman Islands right now and most people talk about it, of his commitment to trying to get things done, and if the hurdles weren't in the way they would have been done.

I almost remember every other week there's another post about these same kind of—what do you call it? What kind of houses did you call them again, former Minister?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Modular houses. Every two weeks, the Honourable Minister would post something in our Government group chat about modular housing. You remember guys? "*Boy, we got to try this. It could be more affordable; a Caymanian could have a house for \$50,000. We can do this. Take government land and boom, boom, boom, boom.*" Matter of fact, I'm going to see if it's in my WhatsApp history. That's all he did.

He cared about housing, he wanted Caymanian housing and no one can tell me he doesn't want it changed. What I find is the biggest problem that we have here as legislators, no matter what side you're on, is the bureaucracy from doing it. Everyone sees the container houses and how nice they look. The biggest argument they're going to use is, some of them, they're not hurricane rated; well I tell you what, the engineering is getting better so that those ones are now hurricane rated too, so they don't have that as an excuse; but somebody is holding up something. Maybe it's because they don't want their—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: —or they don't like the look of it. I tell you what, tell that to a person who's homeless. You think they care how it look. They just want a roof over their head.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the former Minister about modular housing, but I want the public to know it's not because of the efforts of the housing minister why it's not done. I won't make any exceptions or excuses, we are going to have to fight a battle of bureaucracy before we even take on the battle of the many different issues that we have; whether it's housing, whether it's health, whether it's roads, whether it's social development because there's too much bureaucracy getting in the way of us helping our people. Every single person who talks here talks about a social commitment to the people and what we want, so I don't think that there is not a will to do it.

Why is it that the houses weren't built in the last administration? I don't think it's because the Opposition didn't want to do it, and I know it's not because this Government didn't want to do it, but there's a reason for why things take so long. I remember Mr. Speaker, when you used to say, *"If you want to get anything done, you better get two terms."* Oh, I understand that fully now, sir. It shouldn't be that way.

Mr. Speaker, the former Minister said something about immigration and why our government never got up to speak yesterday. I didn't think that was necessary, but it is silly season. The context of what he meant was that, you know, we have all of these issues that are affecting social development and it's as a result of the immigration concerns, the growth of the population and the number of persons becoming Caymanian and being dependent on the system of welfare, so I get where he was coming with the context and the scope of the debate.

However, he didn't need to say, *"And no Government Member got up to say anything."* We spoke with our vote. The Member who presented the Bill is a Member of this Government. He's still here. We spoke with our vote. To be honest with you, if I never asked for a division, I bet you the same Member would have probably said, 'oh, he didn't support it,' but I tell you

what, we're all on record now. That's the answer to the immigration question.

Mr. Speaker, what I have in my hand, just for the public's listening ear because I think most people know how I feel about immigration, but I respect collective responsibility and I will—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: I have to respect my colleague, the Minister for Immigration. Until that changes, I respect collective responsibility and I'm learning the very principles of mature politics.

The part that bothers me is this. This is a document that I have here that we've been working on together as a Government, including those four that left, which has 21 changes and 10 changes to Regulation. We've been working on it for probably about a year now, probably a little longer than that, about immigration changes. That's why I eased up on the Minister and said, *"All right, we're comfortable with this."*

It's not like the former minister, doesn't know that because he was right there. Don't pretend and tell the public about how the Government didn't get up and say anything about immigration; it's because the Minister plans to bring something. We've said so, you were there. I'm not satisfied as to how much you've done, but don't paint the picture incorrectly. It isn't fair.

Mr. Speaker, I do believe this Bill is an improvement and I want to thank the former Minister for his hard work. He worked very hard from the legislative and policy perspective with the support of amazing staff members, they're the hard workers—they are. A matter of fact, most times as government, and I think Mr. Speaker, I think you would agree with me here, politicians got much credit for many things. Come out and shine, *"Oh, this policy that I've drafted and the legislation,"* and none of us are doing it. It's great civil servants in the background, great policy advisors, great legal drafters, great stakeholder involvement who're supposed to be the persons getting the credit. They do all the hard work.

I'll give credit for the stage of the journey that the [former] Minister did; took it from his team, guided them as to the government's policy and this is a reflection of that. Good. They gave the knowledge because he's a lawyer, but he isn't a social welfare advisor. Just like me in Tourism, I didn't come from a tourism background, I take my advice from my tourism team and I can't take the credit for my Director, Rosa Harris' *hard work*. I always respect and say, *I am pleased on behalf of the hard working team of...* because they are the professionals. We are the policy makers.

Former Minister, thank you for what you've done, and I'm not going to try to take any credit for much of what I've done, but I am honoured to now lead this new group and I think you guys are going to do some amazing things. As long as you have the support

and the programmes and the resources, because I know that your heart and mind are in the right place. I knew that from when we went through each one of these Bills, from adoption to children to maintenance to seniors, I can see that you were thinking about the things that really affect the people. I'm assuming that you studied for that. I'm proud of you.

Cayman has much to look forward to in respect of the continued growth and change in our approach, but that could be any Minister because the hard work is in the Ministry. You deserve the credit.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: I would like to say thank you directly to our former Member of this honourable House, Ms. Lucille. She's been a driving force and a beacon, a lighthouse for focus on the issue. It's almost like a sailor trying to get back home to Spot Bay and looking on the Bluff to look at the lighthouse and say, "*Oh, it's over here!*", keep focused on home. Keep focused on home. Every time the government or Ministry or staff tried to stray off track, she was there. "*Remember the seniors in this country, don't forget them. Don't forget them.*" If you tried to forget them, she'll wake up and knock on your door and say, "*Oi, you forget about the seniors or wha'?*", because she don't play.

I'll be honest with you, I hope one day that her statue is out in front of this building for the hard work and commitment that she's done for those who are most vulnerable, because she deserves it. Let it be first said here today, I hope I can honour you before the Lord calls you home, Ms. Lucille. You're amazing.

Let me just say the names of all those, particularly the legal drafters who helped with that part of things before we wrap up.

[Cross talk]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Premier: Mr. Speaker, I spoke about my Ministry team, I also want to speak just for the name of the individuals within the Department of Children and Family Services. I think most of us know about Ms. Paulinda Mendoza-Williams, who's the director. Ms. Director, I'm going to get you more support if it's the last thing I do.

Mr. Rayle Roberts, Deputy Director, hardworking, straightforward shooter, and he'll look at me in the face and say, "*Minister, you want X, I need Y,*" and I appreciate that because that's the kind of approach we're going to need to do the things that I know you guys want to do.

Ms. Cassandra Fearon, the social worker manager, I don't know how you deal with the excess pressure you get having to be the person who is solely responsible for social care for seniors with such a small team, but I pray God continues to give you and your team all the strength you need because you do such an amazing job to care for our people, but you need more support.

To the Legislative Drafting Department, Ms. Myrtle Brandt, Cheryl Neblett; the Legal Steering Committee from the Chair of the Ministry Ms. Deborah Webb-Sibblies; and obviously my cool and awesome new Deputy Chief Officer, Mr. Trevor Gibbs; and Senior Policy Advisor, Ms. Petkovsek. I said that right? All right, that was good. Representatives from the Council of Older Persons, and of course, we highlighted Ms. Lucille. I just want to say, by the way, she's from George Town Central and I'm going to be biased here, but she's that awesome because of where she's from. We've got some good people from all over the Cayman Islands like the amazing is Ms. Alice Mae Coe who is a fighter, sometimes we're at odds on the different things, but I would love to have her on my side fighting for the causes I fight because she will fight to the end. Ms. Alice Mae Coe thank you for your continued commitment to the Council of Older Persons. Also, Ms. Annie Multon, Mr. John Ebanks and additional members, Linda Mitchell, Rosie Whittaker-Myles and Stephanie Azan.

Additional consultation has been conducted with all of the external community partners in the Cayman Islands and we commit to continue the work that started even before this Administration—went through the former Minister, now in my hands of responsibility and this Government—and we will continue to give the support that is necessary.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, I think there is a consensus and support in respect of the legislative elements of it so I hope that all Members are willing to vote, yes; so we can get this older persons legislation reformed, amended and more improve for our seniors in the Cayman Islands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The question is that a Bill shortly entitled Older Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2024 be given a second reading. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The Older Persons (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was given a second reading.

The Speaker: Madam Premier, we have reached the hour of interruption. I am entirely in your hands.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10 a.m. on Monday morning.

The Speaker: The question is that the House do now adjourn until 10 a.m. on Monday morning. All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

At 4.33 p.m. the House stood adjourned until 10 a.m. Monday, 16 December, 2024.