



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

Second Meeting of the 2022-2023 Session
Second Sitting

Thursday
8th December, 2022
(Pages 1-65)

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

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

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. McKeeva Bush, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to Tourism <i>and</i> Social Development, Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, MP	Parliamentary Secretary to Home Affairs <i>and</i> Planning, Agriculture & Infrastructure, Elected Member for East End
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Parliamentary Secretary to Labour, Housing <i>and</i> Transport, Elected Member for Bodden Town East

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

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

APOLOGIES

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP	Elected Member for Red Bay
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**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
SECOND MEETING OF THE 2022/23 SESSION
THURSDAY
8 DECEMBER, 2022
10:26 A.M.
Second Sitting**

[Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning.

I call on the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to grace us with prayers.

PRAYERS

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

Good morning, colleagues. Let us pray:

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

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

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

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

Amen.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Proceedings are now resumed.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS
OR AFFIRMATIONS**

The Speaker: None.

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

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
AND OF REPORTS**

**MOODY'S INVESTORS SERVICE –
CREDIT OPINION - 17 OCTOBER 2022 –
GOVERNMENT OF CAYMAN ISLANDS –
Aa3 STABLE**

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, and Border Control and Labour, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Moody's Investors Service Report on the Cayman Islands Government, dated the 17th October, 2022.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Deputy Premier, wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Briefly, Madam Speaker.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, in a report dated the 17th October, 2022, Moody's Investors Service re-affirmed the

Cayman Islands' Aa3 government-bond rating along with a stable outlook. This credit rating applies to all bonds issued by the Government in both foreign and local currencies.

The Aa3 sovereign rating remains in the top tier of Moody's ratings matrix, and our government rating is only three notches below the highest rating of Aaa. Bonds that are rated are judged to be of high quality and are subject to very low credit risks.

Madam Speaker, our rating of Aa3 places us on a similar rating to the following countries:

- Belgium;
- Czech Republic;
- Hong Kong;
- Isle of Man;
- Macau;
- Qatar (which is currently hosting the World Cup);
- Taiwan; and, of course,
- The mother country of the United Kingdom.

Simply put, Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands have the same credit rating according to Moody's, as the United Kingdom. For comparability, Madam Speaker, the following are ratings of countries in close geographical proximity to the Cayman Islands:

- Bahamas – B1
- Barbados – Caa1
- Belize – Caa 2
- Bermuda – A2
- Cuba – Ca
- Dominican Republic – Ba3
- Jamaica – B2
- Nicaragua – B3
- St. Vincent – B3; and
- Trinidad – Ba2

Madam Speaker, Moody's analysis of the Government's credit profile reflects the evaluation of the economic, institutional and fiscal performance of the Cayman Islands using a number of criteria.

Our positive rating is a result of the following key drivers:

1. A very high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita;
2. A comparatively low government debt burden; and
3. Consistent macroeconomic management.

I will now briefly explain, Madam Speaker, the significant indicators cited by Moody's that have positively impacted our ratings. On the subject of economic strength, Moody's determination of economic strength is reflected in economies' wealth, size, and structural factors that point to long term economic robustness and shock absorption capacity.

The Cayman Islands economic strength was rated 'moderate' by Moody's. This is balanced with our limitations as a small island economy that is highly dependent on financial and tourism related services. However, Moody's note that large-scale projects over the past five years have increased the economy's diversification.

Another area that Moody's looked at, Madam Speaker, was institutional strength, which reflects the country's governance model, the quality of its institutions and the predictability of its policies. Moody's ranked the Cayman Islands institutional strength at Aa3, which is only three notches below the highest rating possible. Based on the worldwide governance indicators, Madam Speaker, compiled by the World Bank Group, Cayman is amongst the highest in the region for institutional strength and ranks in the top 30 percentile of all sovereigns rated by Moody's, including highly developed countries.

Moody's credit our relationship with the United Kingdom for enhancing the stability of the government, while also highlighting our long history of policy consensus and a consistent macroeconomic approach.

With regard to fiscal strength, Madam Speaker, Moody's defines the fiscal strength of a country based on the overall health of its national government finances, particularly with regard to its debt levels. The fiscal strength of the Cayman Islands was rated as very high, only one notch below the highest rating possible.

Madam Speaker, the perceived fiscal strength of our government is underscored by our relatively low debt burden, coupled with our commitment to fiscal prudence. The affordable debt burden is also supported by our long history of pegging our currency to the US dollar, which significantly reduces the risk of exchange rate shocks. However, Madam Speaker, with regard to susceptibility to event risk—the final factor in Moody's credit risk assessment—I must say it is basically that: our event risk, which evaluates our vulnerability to any risk which may severely strain public finances.

The Cayman Islands varies in this area; it is actually rated "a". Despite our vulnerability to external shocks given our small, open economy, Moody's considered the inherent resilience of the local economy and the robustness of our institutions. Although hurricanes are a recurrent threat given our geographical location, Moody's notes that the relative wealth of the jurisdiction provides a strong buffer.

The report also recognises Cayman's highly stable political environment in the past and the likelihood of a destabilising event being very small because of the strong institutions and the UK government's oversight. However, Madam Speaker, Moody's notes: **long-term economic risks related to loss of competitiveness for the islands' two key indus-**

tries (tourism and financial services), **could hurt government finances.**

In closing, Madam Speaker, the latest evaluation from Moody's reflects confidence in our country's economic, fiscal and institutional strength; however, it also challenges us, as responsible stakeholders, to ensure that these accomplishments are maintained for the benefit of all Caymanians. Despite Cayman's high GDP per capita and fiscal strength, we cannot become complacent. We must remain committed to ensuring that our debt burden remains very low and affordable, while constantly looking for opportunities and developments that can diversify and grow our economy for the benefit of all Caymanians.

Madam Speaker, I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - UNAUDITED
QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT - NINE-MONTH
PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2022 –
CORE GOVERNMENT**

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Madam Speaker... Sorry, which one was this again?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Unaudited? Okay.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report for the Core Government of the Cayman Islands for the nine-month period ended 30th September, 2022.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Deputy Premier wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Yes, Madam Speaker, briefly.

[Pause]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Madam Speaker, on the 11th November, 2022, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development arranged for the gazettal of the Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report for the Core Government of the Cayman Islands. Such gazettal satisfied the six weeks after the end-of-the-quarter deadline specified in the Act.

Madam Speaker, the information referred hereto is based on records obtained from the General Ledger of the Government's Financial Management System on the 10th October, 2022. It is also based on representation and judgments provided by chief financial officers of Ministries, Portfolios, Offices and of Statutory Authorities and Government Companies (SAGCs). All the amounts that I will provide from this point onward are stated in Cayman Islands Dollars.

The statement of financial position as of the 30th September, 2022, on page 14 of the document, shows that the Core Government ended the period with \$3.3 billion in total assets, \$1.2 billion in total liabilities; and therefore with a \$2.1 billion in net assets or net worth.

Madam Speaker, cash and cash equivalents, which include fixed deposits with maturity duration not exceeding 90 days were \$351.1 million and marketable securities which are all comprised of fixed deposits with maturity durations exceeding 90 days were \$42.6 million for a total of \$393.7 million, with respect to bank account balances. Due to the significant cash balances on hand, the Government continues to place funds on longer-term fixed deposits in order to maximise interest income for the government. These longer-term deposits are shown as marketable securities on the statement of financial position, and are not included in the definition of cash and cash equivalents. That is a separate classification shown on the statement of financial position, which only represent deposits that are 90 days or less to maturity.

Other marketable securities, Madam Speaker, which consists of US Government Treasury Notes purchased on the 20th June, were CI \$280.5 million or the equivalent of US \$338 million. The public debt for the Core Government stood at \$524.4 million at the 30th September, 2022. This was \$289.3 million more than the debt balance at the 30th September, 2021. The debt balance increased as a result of the loan drawdown of US \$393 million of standby line of credit.

The statement of financial performance for the period, Madam Speaker, shown on page 7 of the document, indicates that Core Government earned total operating revenue of \$818 million and incurred total operating expenditure of \$720.9 million. The resulting operating surplus for Core Government was \$97.1 million at the end of September.

Madam Speaker, SAGCs posted a collective deficit of \$15.2 million for the period and thus, the entire public sector had an operating surplus of \$81.9 million for the period, which was 49.8 per cent ahead of surplus projections for the period.

Madam Speaker, revenues recorded for the period of \$818 million were \$53.9 million ahead of budget projections. This positive variance was mainly concentrated in the category of coercive revenue, which are revenues received by government by virtue of coercive powers of certain Acts. Coercive revenue was \$44.4 million greater than budgeted expectation

for the period, and \$23.9 million greater than the period year to date, actual revenues.

The positive variance, Madam Speaker, was largely attributed to financial service fees collected by CIMA for government, which was \$6.2 million better than budget; and was actually made up from licence fees from mutual fund administrators, which was \$4.4 million better than budget, and private fund fees, which was \$4.43 million better than budget. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, Securities and Investment Business Licence was actually \$1.5 million less than what we expected.

Work permit revenues, Madam Speaker, were \$11.6 million better than budget, which would represent an increased demand for workers as the economy moved beyond phase five of the border reopening plan; and a stronger-economic-performance than expected. Of course, Madam Speaker, property related revenue, which pretty much relates to stamp duty, was \$18 million ahead of expected revenues for the period. These positive variances from the budget expectations were partially offset by negative variance in other areas of revenue category, namely, import duty revenues, which were \$15.2 million less than budget, and tourism related revenues which were only half a million below budget projections for the period.

Madam Speaker, I want to pause here to note that the Government did expect import duties to be a little behind budget, primarily for two reasons:

1. When we approved the budget on customs related [matters], we did it in a linear timeline where we basically took the total amount and divided it across the 12 months. What history has shown, Madam Speaker, is that the first six months of the year, the government collects 45 per cent of customs revenue and the remaining six months of the year is where the [remaining] 55 per cent of the revenues comes in. I say that based on the October numbers that we are seeing, which are reflective of past performance;
2. It should also be noted, Madam Speaker, that we expected the negative variance due to the fact that the Government removed duties on many essential family items such as baby food, baby formula, sanitary napkins and so forth after we prepared the budget. Thus, we expected that anywhere from \$3 to \$4 million of revenues related to that would have been foregone this year.

Madam Speaker, with regard to tourism-related revenues, I must say that, because of the late reopening in the tourism industry due to the Omicron variant early in the year, et cetera, we missed out on some of the revenues we normally would have expected from cruise such as Port fees, and those num-

bers are just those numbers—when you miss them, you can't get them back.

What I can say, Madam Speaker, is that, were it not for the increase in tourism accommodation tax and the high tourism numbers that we are seeing, the variance would have been much higher—again, thanks to the Minister and his team for what they have been doing in that regard. While I am only reporting on the September results, I can say that the government's expectation from tourism-related revenues actually surpassed budget for the first time at the end of October.

That was driven by \$2.4 million better in tourism accommodation tax, which actually offset what we lost in cruise tourism, so I want to publicly thank the Minister of Tourism and his team, for their efforts in this endeavour because I can honestly say that when we saw the late opening and late start, we were a bit worried about those numbers being met. I genuinely want to thank the Minister for allowing me to sleep better at night, in terms of making-up the shortfall.

Madam Speaker, expenses incurred for the period ending September were \$720.9 million, which was actually \$37.8 million higher than the original budget that we had presented in this honourable Parliament. The areas that really increased the negative variance were the transfer payments because, as you know, we paid the stipend much longer than we had budgeted for—again, because of the late re-opening; and NGS 55, which is pretty much a healthcare cost. In a nutshell, Madam Speaker, the negative variance was a result of us taking care of and helping our people. Nothing else.

The good news, and I want to publicly thank the Deputy Governor and his team, is that they were able to offset the overspend by savings in personnel costs, which was \$19.3 million better than budget, and supplies and consumables, which was \$13.7 million better than budget. Again, those savings were the primary reason the negative variant in expenditure wasn't as bad as it could have been.

Madam Speaker, as Honourable Members will know, the initial budget for 2022 financial year was approved in Parliament on the 8th December, 2021. It is important that I make it absolutely clear, that although I have spoken of budgets being overspent, this is a reference to the initial budget estimates for the 2022 financial year, which was passed in December 2021 and Government obtained the required approvals in 2022 to spend at levels greater than were initially budgeted.

Those approvals either came from Finance Committee in March, June and October, or from Cabinet via section 11(5) of the Act at various dates in 2022—in short, Madam Speaker, the proper authority for the incurring of amounts that led to the description of overspending because the description relates to a position that has been superseded by changes made during 2022. As I said, all necessary approvals were

obtained whether by Cabinet or by Finance Committee.

Madam Speaker, costs related to personnel for the period amounted to \$300.7 million, which reflects an under-spend on personnel cost of \$19.3 million, which was six per cent of the initial budget projection for these costs for the nine-month period. This favourable variance is the result of several Ministries and Portfolios having vacant posts which as at the 30th September, 2022, remained unfilled.

Madam Speaker, I want to pause at this point to recognise that within the Civil Service and the Government as a whole, there was a mind-set of having all hands on deck, and as a result of some vacancies, a good number of members within our public service actually stepped up. They worked longer hours, and spent more time away from their families because you do not get this kind of underspend, without people making sacrifices.

The Government recognised that when we had to pay the tourism stipend much longer than anticipated; *where could we have saved money, in order to help our people?* Again, I really want to publicly thank the Deputy Governor, the Chief Officers and everyone, for really stepping up to the plate and allowing us to, by only spending [on] things that were really compelling and justifiable. Thus the reason we have such a positive variance, not only in personnel cost but also supplies and consumables. That is not something that is lost on the Government as a whole.

Madam Speaker, another thing I want to highlight is that during the 2022 financial year we made a loan facility available to the Cayman Islands Airports Authority (CIAA) and the Turtle Farm for \$18.1 million and \$8.8 million, respectively. The Government made the decision that, rather than have these SAGCs go out and borrow money at high interest rates, the Government would basically lend these entities money at very, very favourable rates.

I think for the first two years, they are paying zero per cent interest because at the end of the day, it is the public's money, any way you want to slice it and dice it—or the term I would normally use to my colleagues '*spaghetti around the plate*'. It makes no sense to have someone borrow money from a bank when the Government has excess cash on hand to help other government entities.

Madam Speaker, the overall fiscal performance reported for the period shows a Core Government operating surplus of \$97.1 million, which is \$16 million or 19.7 per cent greater than the budget expectations for the period. The SAGCs suffered a combined deficit for the period of \$15.2 million which meant that when the small deficit from the SAGCs combined with the material surplus by central government, the entire public sector achieved a surplus of \$81.9 million or 49.8 per cent ahead of the Entire Public Sector (EPS) surplus projection for the period.

The Government's cash position ended \$393.7 million for the period; of that, \$165.8 million was held in reserve and restricted deposits and \$227.9 million as operating bank account balances.

Madam Speaker, I want to pause there again, just to note that the Government made the decision to draw down on the standby loan facility that was put in place by the previous government which had a fixed borrowing rate of 3.25 per cent for 15 years. The Government expected there would have been rising interest rates cost—yet everyone has seen where prime has gone—so we put the money down, Madam Speaker, borrowed it, then bought US Treasury securities; at the time, the rate was around 2.8 per cent.

We are paying 3.25 per cent, but we reinvested it at 2.8 per cent, so the overall carrying cost is less than half of a per cent; again, that will also [be] a standby because those securities are easily convertible if needs be, but at this point we don't think we need to. We basically bought them to mature at the end of June next year or thereabouts, Madam Speaker. Again, we have that additional cash to call on if ever the need arises.

The Government made that decision, you know, living in the hurricane belt, just in case anything popped up, at least we know we would have had resources and reserves enough to satisfy any emergency or contingency; but by the grace of God again, Madam Speaker, the country was seen through with no major impacts this financial year. I really want to thank God for his continued grace and blessing on the Cayman Islands.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased with the Government's financial performance for the past nine months of the year, reinforcing the PACT Government's commitment to maintaining fiscal prudence and improving government's financial position as we recover from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic and deal with rising global inflation and other international economic pressures.

The third-quarter performance of 2022 has favourably positioned the Government for the remainder of the year, assuming the remainder of the year does not perform different from budget expectations. We are well aware that continued fiscal discipline is critical, and ongoing monitoring of public finances is absolutely necessary more so now, with the impending economic challenges which many economists predict within the next year.

The Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report for the Core Government of the Cayman Islands for the nine-month period ended 30 September, 2022 is available on the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development website www.gov.ky/finance and it was gazetted on the 11th November, 2022.

In closing, I want to thank all of my colleagues and the wider Civil Service for putting up with me during the period; all the emails, pushbacks, et cetera. Again, this is a collective effort and it could not have

been achieved without all hands on deck, so I want to publicly thank my honourable colleagues—the Honourable Premier and all the Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries, as well as the Deputy Governor and the wider Civil Service for their efforts.

Thank you, Madam. Speaker,

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - PLAN & ESTIMATES – 2ND SUPPLEMENTARY PLAN AND ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY 2020 TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - PLAN & ESTIMATES – 1ST SUPPLEMENTARY PLAN AND ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY 2021 TO 31 DECEMBER 2021

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the 2020 Supplementary Plan and Estimates for the Government of the Cayman Islands for the Financial Years ended 2020 and 2021.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Deputy Premier wish to speak?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Briefly, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 67(1), both the 2020 and 2021 supplementary plan and estimates documents that have been laid stand referred to Finance Committee. As they will be considered in Finance Committee at the conclusion of the Second Reading of the associated Supplementary Appropriation Bill that is further down on the Order Paper, I only wish to make brief remarks with respect to the Tabled documents.

Madam Speaker, the 2020 Supplementary Plan and Estimates document that has just been Tabled is structured in the following way:

Section A of the document shows the following information in respect of the specific appropriations being changed:

- The amount of the original approved appropriation for a particular budget item;
- The amount of supplementary appropriation proposed for a particular budget item; and
- The revised appropriation amount for a particular budget item.

Section B of the document shows the financial statements for the financial year ended 31st December 2020 and 31st December 2021.

Madam Speaker, Honourable Members should use this Supplementary Plan and Estimates as a document that provides more information to each of

the items in the Schedule of the Supplementary Appropriation Bill for the 2020 and 2021 Financial Years. As I noted before, those Bills appear further down on the Order Paper.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT – ENTIRE PUBLIC SECTOR – ANNUAL REPORT – FOR THE 18-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2017

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT – ENTIRE PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTS – ANNUAL REPORT – FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament the Entire Public Sector Annual Report for the 18-month period ended 31st December 2017, and the 12-month period ended 31st December, 2018.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Member wish to speak?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Just to say thanks to my finance team and all the different entities, including the Auditor General, for the work they have done. These are related to 2017 and 2018 (before this Government came), but are part of the exercise to ensure that we are compliant with the law.

[Thank you,] Madam Speaker.

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - PLAN AND ESTIMATES - FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022; FOR 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - BUDGET STATEMENTS: HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT; PORTFOLIO OF THE CIVIL SERVICE; PORTFOLIO OF LEGAL AFFAIRS; OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS; JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION; OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE; OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN – FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022; FOR 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2023

CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - BUDGET STATEMENTS: CABINET OFFICE; MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY; MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC

**DEVELOPMENT; MINISTRY OF BORDER
CONTROL – FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR:
1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022; FOR 2023
FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO
31 DECEMBER 2023**

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - BUDGET
STATEMENTS: MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS;
MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SPORTS, CULTURE AND
HERITAGE; MINISTRY OF FINANCIAL SERVICES
AND COMMERCE; MINISTRY OF INVESTMENT,
INNOVATION AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT;
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION; MINISTRY OF
DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND LANDS – FOR
2022 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO 31
DECEMBER 2022; FOR 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR:
1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2023**

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT - BUDGET
STATEMENTS: MINISTRY OF PLANNING,
AGRICULTURE, HOUSING AND
INFRASTRUCTURE; MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND
TRANSPORT; MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND
WELLNESS – FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR:
1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022; FOR 2023
FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO
31 DECEMBER 2023**

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT – PURCHASE
AGREEMENTS - FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR:
1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022;
FOR 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO
31 DECEMBER 2023**

**CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT – OWNERSHIP
AGREEMENTS - FOR 2022 FINANCIAL YEAR:
1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022;
FOR 2023 FINANCIAL YEAR: 1 JANUARY TO
31 DECEMBER 2023**

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

On behalf of the Government, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the finalised Budget Documents for the Financial Years ending 31st December 2022 and 31st December 2023.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Member wish to speak?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier:
Briefly, Madam Speaker.

The documents being Tabled are actually several, hence the size of it. Madam Clerk, I'll just read all of them; it will be easier for your team.

These documents, Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands Government - Plan and Estimates -

For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023.

It also includes Madam Speaker, Cayman Islands Government - Budget Statements: House of Parliament; Portfolio of the Civil Service; Portfolio of Legal Affairs; Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; Judicial Administration; Office of the Commissioner of Police; Office of the Ombudsman – For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023.

The documents also include Madam Speaker, Cayman Islands Government - Budget Statements: Cabinet Office; Ministry of Sustainability and Climate Resiliency; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; Ministry of Border Control – For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023.

Madam Speaker, also included is the Cayman Islands Government - Budget Statements: Ministry of Home Affairs; Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage; Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce; Ministry of Investment, Innovation and Social Development; Ministry of Education; Ministry of District Administration and Lands – For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023.

Also included, Madam Speaker is the Cayman Islands Government - Budget Statements: Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure; Ministry of Tourism and Transport; Ministry of Health and Wellness – For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023.

It also includes Madam Speaker, the Cayman Islands Government – Purchase Agreements - For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023 and the Cayman Islands Government – Ownership Agreements - For 2022 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2022; For 2023 Financial Year: 1 January to 31 December 2023. That's the stack, Madam Speaker; it was too much to have gone through the process, but Members would have seen the other finalised budgets.

Just to note, Madam Speaker, that as Members of this Honourable Parliament and the public would be aware, there are times during Finance Committee when some Members would make changes on the Floor whereby some things would have increased or decreased or we pick up different errors along the way—certain commas or typos. That is now the finalised budget for everything that has been approved for both 2022 and 2023 coming out of last year December's Finance Committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**CAYMAN ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT BANK –
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED
DECEMBER 31, 2021**

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Report for the Cayman Islands Development Bank, commonly referred to as CIDB, for the year ended 31st December, 2021.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Member wish to speak?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Briefly, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Office of the Auditor General issued an unqualified or clean audit opinion on the financial statements for CIDB for the 2021 year.

The Auditor General also included an *emphasis of matter* paragraph in her opinion; however, this does not change the unqualified or clean audit opinion issued. The purpose of the *emphasis of matter*, Madam Speaker, is to draw attention to the following: CIDB is significantly reliant on continued government support in the form of proceeds from capital injections in order to meet its obligations and sustain its operational expenditures; and 34 per cent or \$6 million excluding allowances for credit losses of the overall loan portfolio of CIDB is impaired.

Madam Speaker, during the 2021 financial year, CIDB approved seventy-six new loans inclusive of restructures on existing loan disbursements totalling \$900,000. As at 31 December 2021, CIDB's loan portfolio stood at \$17.1 million, prior to a loan loss provision of \$700,000. This is a decrease of 11 per cent when compared to the loan portfolio for the prior year ended 31st December, 2020. As disclosed in note 6 of the Financial Statement, the majority of the loan portfolio is comprised of mortgages \$6.9 million, business loans \$2 million, student loans \$2.2 million, and debt consolidation \$2.5 million.

Madam Speaker, delinquent loans continued to decrease and fell to 34 per cent, totalling \$6 million as at 31st December, 2021. This is compared to 35.5 per cent or \$7.4 million from the previous year.

As at 31st December 2021, the total assets of CIDB stood at \$47.3 million of which \$1.5 million is comprised of cash and fixed deposits.

Overall, total liabilities increased by \$1.1 million, primarily due to \$7.6 million that CIDB held on behalf of the Ministry of Education Scholarship Fund.

CIDB's long-term loan facility with FirstCaribbean International Bank stood at \$7.6 million, which is down from \$11.6 million in the previous year.

Madam Speaker, CIDB incurred a net loss of \$300,000 after earning \$1.7 million in net income from

operations and incurring \$2 million in administrative expenses. CIDB had no known contingent liabilities as of 31st December, 2021.

Madam Speaker, I just want to pause here to make a note. You notice I mentioned that for the 2021 year CIDB actually issued seventy-six loans for \$900,000. While I recognise that this is Tabled in the 2021 results, I can safely say to Honourable Members of this House that for this year, CIDB set out to lend-out around \$15 million. I can say that as of right now, the entire amount was loaned so much so that last week we disbursed \$2.2 million of the equity injections for CIDB and early next year we are getting ready to send the other \$4.5 million that was approved by Finance Committee.

Madam Speaker, I want to make a note right here, because I am having a meeting with the CIDB Board of Directors next week to impress upon them the need to put something in place for our senior citizens. Around three weeks ago I received a call that really disturbed me—a lady with a balance of \$58,000 on her loan on a property valued at \$700,000 who could not afford to make the payments with the rise in interest rates.

When she reached out to the bank to restructure her loan in a manner that would give her a payment that she could now afford, because of the inflationary pressures, et cetera, she would have to work an additional three years past her expected retirement date. Madam Speaker, from a banking standpoint, \$58,000 balance on a \$700,000 property makes the loan devalue very low—in a sense, what banks would refer to as “low risk”. The lady is this close to paying off her mortgage; as such, I will be impressing on the Board of Directors of CIDB to set aside at least \$2 million of the funds to see how we can help seniors and what are the reduced interest rates.

It is unfair that people have worked this long and due to no fault of their own, other than the fact that just about all global currencies are pegged to the US dollar and the US has decided to export inflation to every country around the world...

I say this to say, Madam Speaker, that every country in their own sovereign right can do what they please in terms of their own domestic economy, but I want Members to think about this: In the last two years, the total amount of US dollars that was printed, went from \$4 trillion to \$20 trillion. Basically, \$16 trillion were printed in a two year period. When you have this much money in people's pockets, it drives up demand—and when demand increases, price increases. We're still struggling with global supply issues and the war in Ukraine, et cetera, makes for a challenging time.

We recognise that many of our people are hurting. Younger families have the ability to refinance, and can probably help themselves in some ways, but for our seniors who are very close to retirement and

looking forward to enjoying their golden years, it would be difficult to refinance up to the age of seventy.

That is why I will be impressing on the CIDB Board of Directors to set aside money, particularly to help our seniors who would have been close to paying off their mortgage and, again, through no fault of their own—other than the fact that the Federal Reserve of the US has been raising interest rates like crazy. They don't have the luxury some of us younger folks would have, to go to the bank and say, *well, let us put this off and, hopefully, things get better in the short to medium term that we can probably make adjustments*. They don't have that luxury.

If all goes well, it is my intention to seek additional funds from my colleagues, with the support of the Opposition, that we can use to help our seniors and people in this country because, again, it is through no fault of their own. I just needed to put that out there.

Madam Speaker, in closing, the Government and I want to extend gratitude to the CIDB Board of Directors for their assistance. I must really single out Chairman, Mark Scotland, and the Board he is working with in the work they have been doing. I can tell you I get a call from him almost every two or three days so, very active. The Board is working. I am very pleased with what they are doing, and I love the fact that their heart is in the right place. To go from lending \$900,000 one year, to \$15 million the next year shows exactly how involved they are, so I really and truly want to thank everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MERCERMARSH BENEFITS - IPSAS 39 –
ACTUARIAL VALUATION REPORT AS AT
DECEMBER 31, 2021 – POST RETIREMENT
HEALTHCARE PROGRAM – CAYMAN ISLANDS
GOVERNMENT, 13 APRIL 2022**

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Post-Retirement Healthcare Programme Actuarial Valuation Report as at 31 December 2021.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Deputy Premier wish to speak?

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, briefly.

Madam Speaker, the Government provides healthcare benefits to civil servants, civil servant pensioners, indigent, seamen and veterans. As of 30th September 2020, 3,936 persons were receiving healthcare benefits including hospital and physician services, home health care, prescription drugs therapy, medical equipment, vision and dental care. Each

person, Madam Speaker, has a lifetime benefit of \$5 million.

Madam Speaker, on 13th April 2022, Mercer-Marsh Benefits issued a report on the actuarial valuation of Government's post-retirement healthcare liability and cost as at 31st December 2021. Based on the number of economic and demographic assumptions data provided by the Government and the benefits of the programme as of the 31st December 2021, the actuary estimated the Government's post-retirement healthcare liability and cost to be \$2.218 billion and \$185.583 million respectively.

The fundamental accounting principle of accrual means that, in addition to the salaries and wages that are paid annually to its employees in any given financial year, Government should also recognise or accrue in the same financial year for the cost of the future benefits an employee earns as a result of providing employment services to the Government in the same financial year. These costs are real and reflect the true cost to the Government for the post-retirement healthcare benefits its employees, pensioners, seamen and veterans currently enjoy.

Madam Speaker, although the liability will only become due and payable in future years, the actual cost of providing for the future benefits should be recognised over the period that employee is rendering its service that will ultimately give rise to those benefits.

Madam Speaker, I want to briefly speak to the accounting treatment of the post-retirement healthcare liability and costs.

Madam Speaker, in accordance with Schedule 6: Section 25 of the Public Management and Finance Act (2020 Revision) and the Government's adopted accounting standards which is International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the post-retirement healthcare liability of \$2.218 billion and a cost of \$185.583 million should be recognised on the face of Government's primary Financial Statements—otherwise known as the Statement of Financial Position or the Balance Sheet; and a Statement of Financial Performance, also known as Income Statement. At present, the Government does not account for these matters on the face of its primary Financial Statements. Instead, details are provided in a note to the primary Financial Statement.

Madam Speaker, previous governments have chosen to not recognise the liability and full cost, as it will put the Government at risk of breaching the principles of responsible financial management, in particular, the operating surplus and network ratios. Breaching the principles requires the Government to seek written approval from the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office to undertake a number of financial transactions, including borrowing or proceeding with projects with a lifetime value of more than \$10 million.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason why the Auditor General has issued an adverse audit opinion on the Entire Public Sector Financial Statement is

the non-recognition of the post-retirement healthcare liability and full cost. An adverse audit opinion signifies the financial statements are materially misstated and do not conform to the Government's adopted accounting standards.

Madam Speaker, the PACT Government is willing to consider the recognition of post-retirement healthcare liability and full costs in the face of the Entire Public Sector Financial Statement. However, it would like to discuss the economic and demographic assumptions with the actuary with the objective of trying to ascertain whether there are ways and means of reducing the liability and costs involved, without causing any significant reduction in the benefits that persons are supposed to be receiving over their lifetime.

Madam Speaker, something that jumped out on the actuarial report—and I am sure the Leader of the Opposition would appreciate this. If you look at, I think it is Page A-3, we notice that in the 2020 Financial Year the effect of changes in demographic assumptions changed roughly by \$409,775,000. This is why I said that we need to have that active discussion with the actuaries to really look at their summary, because I really and truly would like to see, or get a better understanding, of what assumptions would have changed resulting in such a large material change.

I recognise that there may be more data that we need to provide, but as the Government looks at its current costs—and I think those costs are actually recorded in output CIN 2 [Health Insurance for Civil Service Pensioners], which would have been approved by the Finance Committee—at this point we are spending roughly \$35-\$36 million on over 2,000 retirees. Thus, the question that we have [and] we're trying to understand is, if we even take 4,000 [retirees] now and carry [those figures] into the future, a number of \$185 million seems quite high if 2,000 [retirees] is now running \$35-\$36 million.

I think where the adjustments need to be looked at, and again, this is just my personal opinion Madam Speaker, is that, while we recognise that this report looks at everything at an arm's length transaction, it does not factor in the fact that the Government also has its own hospital. It is the same as you having a car, Madam Speaker—while you may recognise certain warranties, if you are a mechanic or have a garage, you can reduce costs. There has to be some factoring in for that, and we believe it is one area of discussion we probably need to look at with the actuaries to get this thing bedded down once and for all, so that we can be fully compliant and not have an adverse opinion from the Auditor General.

I would have liked to just get up and reported without saying anything, but that would be inconsistent with the transparency principles of the PACT Government, so I just have to put it out there. I know what it means, but at the end of the day it is what this Government is committed to—put all information out there, good and bad so thank you, Madam Speaker.

REPORT & RECOMMENDATION OF THE MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR LANDS ON THE VESTING OF CROWN LAND BLOCK 1D PARCEL 87 TO DOMINIQUE HENRY AND/OR MARTHA HURLSTON

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of District Administration and Lands.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Minister of Education and District Administration and Lands, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this is my Report recommending the vesting of Crown land at Registration Section West Bay North West Block 1D Parcel 87 to Dominique Henry and/or Martha Hurlston in accordance with section 10(1)(b) of the said Act [Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2005 Revision)]. It will be accompanied by the documents required pursuant to section 10(2) of the said Act which contains details of the proposed vesting.

I hereby beg your indulgence and permission to lay the said Report on the Table of this honourable House.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I seek permission to continue by way of remarks by providing Members with some background whereby the Crown purchased the subject parcel of 0.7 acres in the year 2000 for the sum of KY\$60,000; specifically to enable Donna Marley Hurlston and her family to remain in occupation of a family residence already located there. The Hurlston family claimed to have purchased the property in 1989, but failed to register the transfer.

Madam Speaker, the family faced eviction when the registered owners attempted to sell the parcel to a third party in 1999, at which point the family realised it was not the registered owner. The Government stepped in and purchased the land, allowing the family to remain in occupation under a *peppercorn tenancy*. Following a tragic incident on the site in 2009, the tenant relocated and the house was demolished. Ms. Martha Hurlston began to reoccupy the parcel in 2017 without the landowner's consent. The Planning Enforcement Officer served notice on the Crown as the landowner, in light of the lack of planning consent for the structure illegally erected on the property by the occupiers.

Madam Speaker, under threat of eviction, Ms. Hurlston maintains the Hurlston family are the rightful owners of the parcel since 1989, as previously indicated. A good friend of Ms. Hurlston, Ms. Dominique Henry, offered to purchase the parcel from the Crown

for market value. She wishes to do so in an effort to enable her friend to continue to live on the said parcel in West Bay.

In accordance with Section 10(2) of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2005 Revision), three valuations were commissioned for this property: one from the Government's Lands and Survey Department and two from private sector property valuation companies. The three opinions of value are as follows:

	KYD
Lands and Survey Department	\$122,000
Bould Consulting	\$128,000
Blue Point Consultants Ltd.	\$183,000

Madam Speaker, a report on the matter was considered by Cabinet after careful analysis and due consideration of the reports provided. It was resolved by the Cabinet to advise His Excellency the Governor to approve the sale of this Crown property Block 1D Parcel 87 to Ms. Dominique Henry and/or Ms. Martha Hurlston for consideration of \$144,333. The figure represents an average of the three valuation opinions, and stamp duty is not to be waived.

I hereby confirm Madam Speaker, that as required by the said Act, the details of this land matter have been published in the *Cayman Islands Gazette* Issue No. 21/2021 dated the 11th day of October 2021; and in a local newspaper, namely the *Caymanian Times* on the 24th September 2021.

In summary Madam Speaker, the vesting of Crown Land Block 1D Parcel 87 is proposed, and indeed recommended, on the following terms:

- Vendor: the Governor of the Cayman Islands;
- Purchaser: Dominic Henry and/or Martha Hurlston;
- Property: Block 1D Parcel 87;
- Area: 0.7 of an acre;
- Consideration: KY\$144,333;
- Cost: Each party to bear its own respective costs;
- Stamp duty: not to be waived.

As indicated, Madam Speaker, accompanying this report are all the documents required by virtue of section 10(2) of the Governor (Vesting of Lands) Act (2025 Revision) [sic] including all of the valuation reports.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL CAYMAN ISLANDS - REVIEW OF THE PROCUREMENT OF THE LATERAL FLOW TESTS (MARCH 2022)

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Office of the Auditor General report entitled Review of the Procurement of Lateral Flow Tests (March 2022).

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Leader wish to speak?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Briefly, Madam Speaker, just to mention that the report, prepared at the request of the Cabinet, was quite specific. The Auditor General was asked to look into it and answer two specific questions, so it is a factual report and she made, I think, three recommendations in regards to it. Beyond that, Madam Speaker, there is nothing further I can add.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT - PUBLIC SERVICE PENSION BOARD

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Governor.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the 2021 Annual Report for the Public Service Pension Board.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Deputy Governor wish to speak?

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to briefly speak to the Public Service Pensions Board (PSPB) performance during 2021, and share some key highlights. The PSPB manages three distinct plans:

- The Public Service Pensions Plan;
- The Parliamentary Pensions Plan; and
- The Judicial Pensions Plan.

Additionally, it administers ex-gratia pension payments which are directly funded by the Government. During 2021 key investment milestones were as follows:

- The return on the PSPB [Public Service Pensions] fund was 13.1 per cent;
- As at the 31st December, 2021 the PSPB had US \$1.36 billion in assets; and
- The PSPB fund saw growth of US\$157 million.

In terms of administrative milestones, the PSPB processed 3,381 plan member files; conducted 4,144 one-on-one meetings with members; processed

166 new retirements, and delivered twenty presentations to 414 members.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to highlight that despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic that continued last year, on the 1st October, 2021 the PSPB implemented a new customisable pension administrative system that was delivered on time and under budget. This new system is already enhancing Member Services, and new opportunities are growing from this system's launch.

Additionally, the PSPB administered over 1000 ex-gratia and ex-gratia uplift payments on a monthly basis through 2021 and further to that, over the past year, the PSPB has supported the Government by facilitating two one-time payments to pensioners. This included the \$150 per pensioner payment in December 2021 and, earlier this year, the \$450 per pensioner payment to address inflation.

Madam Speaker, the last few years have had global investment uncertainty and significant challenges. In 2021 the PSPB responded again in a successful manner with a double-digit investment return. It is noted that 2022 has brought forward new market and investment challenges with inflation pressures, increasing interest rates, and trends in global investment market decreases. Despite the circumstances of 2022, I am pleased to note that the expertise of the Board of Directors for PSPB make oversight and risk mitigation a priority, to ensure that the PSPB fund is managed during this change in the investment market.

Madam Speaker, in these times, the PSPB has still been able to provide secure retirement income to so many Caymanians and specifically, in 2021, a total of 166 new retirees. This was possible for these new retirees, as there has been a consistent outlook for their pending retirement as the PSPB utilises a quarterly credited rate of return. This quarterly return is calculated using the previous three years of returns, then applied to members' accounts with the resulting smoothing the market volatility and allowing Caymanians to plan for their retirement without major fluctuations. Further, the PSPB fund holds a diverse portfolio of bonds and equity securities that over the long term provide above-average returns with minimised variability.

Madam Speaker, during these recent times, it is such approaches that show that the PSPB is well positioned to meet the demands of challenging times. In addition to the noteworthy accomplishments that I have highlighted, the PSPB prepared their financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2021 and submitted them to the Auditor General who issued an unqualified opinion.

Madam Speaker, having provided you with these key highlights, I am certain you will agree that the PSPB's performance, both operationally and financially, was indeed a success in 2021. That said, I feel confident that the PSPB is ready to address new challenges and concerns that come forward.

I would like to thank the PSPB Chief Executive Officer Ms. Jewel Evans Lindsey and her team; and Chairperson Ms. Sheree Ebanks, and other distinguished members of the Board of Directors for their sound leadership and ongoing commitment to Caymanians, especially those who are members of the Public Service Pension Board.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson
That's right, yes; the Deputy Premier reminded me. I also want to congratulate the Board on their 30th anniversary.

Madam Speaker, I think we have much to be proud of on the performance of the Public Service Pension Board and I want to, like I said, record my thanks to the Chief Executive Officer, her staff and the Board for their outstanding performance.

Thank you.

**2021/2022 — 1 JULY 2021 - 30 JUNE 2022
ANNUAL REPORT — (ACC) ANTI-CORRUPTION
COMMISSION CAYMAN ISLANDS**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION'S 2021-2022
ANNUAL REPORT**

The Speaker: The Honourable Attorney General.

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

Madam Speaker, I seek the leave of the House to lay on the Table both the report of the Anti-Corruption Commission for the period 2021/22, and an Executive Summary covering the same period.

The Speaker: Does the Honourable Attorney General wish to speak?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin:
Madam Speaker, just to highlight that the following persons were members of the commission during the reporting period:

- Mrs. Sophia-Ann Harris, Chairman;
- Mrs. Kadi Pentney;
- Mr. Kenrick Hall;
- Mr. Adrian (Gus) Pope;
- Mr. Simon Whicker; and
- Mr. Ben Tonner who served from the 15th of March to the 20th May, 2022.

Since then, Madam Speaker, there have been some changes; the current membership comprises:

- Mr. Adrian (Gus) Pope, Chairman;

- Mr. Kenrick Hall;
- Mr. Simon Whicker;
- Mr. Laurence Aiolfi;
- Ms. Kendra Foster;
- Mr. Romeo Frederick; and
- Mr. Charles Jennings

Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Government I want to say thanks to the members for their service on the Anti-corruption Commission. I thank you.

QUESTIONS TO HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Suspension of Standing Order 23(7) and (8) (For questions to be asked past 11am)

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I rise to ask this honourable House to suspend Standing Orders 23(7) and (8) so that questions can be taken after the hour of 11 o'clock. Thank you.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 23(7) and (8) be suspended to allow questions to be asked after the hour of 11am. All those in favour, please say Aye, those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

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

NO. 8 VENDING OCCURRING ON PUBLIC BEACH

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town North.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask question number 8 in my name, to the Honourable Minister of District Administration and Lands. The question reads: Can the Honourable Minister advise what is being done to resolve the vending occurring on the Public Beach?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of District Administration and Lands.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The answer: Madam Speaker, I take it that the Honourable Member is referring to the Seven-Mile

Public Beach. The Public Lands Commission has prepared a policy that could be adopted to allow for the granting of some permits to vendors at this location, in accordance with the Public Lands Regulations 2021. The policy is under active consideration by Caucus and Cabinet at this time, as well as the overriding principle of whether or not to permit any vending at this location.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions?

NO. 9 UPDATE ON THE NEIL GODFREY PARK UPGRADES

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town North.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask question number 9 in my name, to the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure. The question reads: Can the Honourable Minister provide an update on the Neil Godfrey Park's upgrades including a bathroom block?

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

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side: Madam Speaker, no funding has been assigned to this project during the current budget period of 2022/23.

The Speaker: Are there any supplementary questions?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

I thank the Honourable Member for that answer. The last time I enquired about this park and the bathroom blocks I was told that the Project Manager was getting quotes, et cetera, or they were out to tender. Can the Honourable Minister then say, whether or not they are in a position to budget for this in the 2023/24 budget?

The Speaker: Minister of Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, the Member for George Town North is correct. We were looking at getting some quotes to figure out what it was going to cost. As soon as I have that cost maybe I can

actually see whether is something that we can put into the next sitting of the budget.

The Speaker: Member for George Town North.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his consideration.

Madam Speaker, through you, I'd just say to the Honourable Member and this House that the Neil Godfrey Park was donated by Mr. Neil Godfrey, known to us all. It is in the heart of the Washington Boulevard area, commonly known as The Swamp. The park is used quite often by the people of that community, it is not overcrowded with everyone else.

The people of that particular community use the park on a regular basis—in fact, we will be having a Christmas party there next week; but there are no restroom facilities and the park is a bit worn, a bit old. I know the people in that area are looking forward to it and would really appreciate some consideration in those upgrades.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, yes. I agree with the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Actually, I had the opportunity this week to go into the area to take a look at the park and walk over there; I agree with him that it needs to have some work done. We were looking to see what we can put forward to ensure that we can deliver on a safe community park for the people in that area. Many of them actually came out and spoke to me, and made suggestions about it.

I want to let the Member know that I take all concerns—his and the people in the area who spoke to me about it—and we will be looking into it to see what we can do in the next financial quarter, Ma'am.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Can I ask the Minister.

A toilet facility is badly, badly, needed at the public beach that is by the Governor's House, which is being used by many people, including tourists; of course, if Government does anything, it would need to be managed, taken care of, properly. I know I'm being a bit longer than I want to be, but I need to say that tons of tourists go there and women have nowhere to go.

I think several Members of this House know about it, so I am wondering and asking—if that is not

yet in the plan—that they put it in the plan but more than that, find funds to do something immediately, because it is used by tourists.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, the last time we were in the House the question came up, about those beaches having restrooms.

Just to let the colleague from West Bay know that we are in the process right now to be able to bring it to Cabinet very shortly. Looking to build restrooms on a few of the other public beaches very shortly. The South Sound dock was also one of them, so I think it is three beaches in total—and Prospect also, as I have been reminded.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport: Madam Speaker, I rise to add some context to the question posed by the Honourable Member for West Bay West. Publicly, we have said that we are in the preliminary stages of discussion about the relocation of the Governor's residence.

As the Minister for Tourism, the property would be something of an attraction where Caymanians can offer both the necessary skill sets to tourists, and an opportunity for a bathroom location, rather than building one on the beach side. If we are able to move forward with those visions and plans for the relocation of the Governor's residence, the location would be more ideal to have an outside facility while offering other factors within the structure from a historical perspective.

I want the honourable House to take that in context as to whether or not the Government decides to just build bathrooms on the beachside next to the Governor's house. I've brought the matter to the attention of my colleagues and I think that we can fairly say there is preliminary support. It is about taking the necessary business case analysis and finding a new location.

As we all know, we are going to transition to a new Governor soon, so it would be important for the new Governor to know that there will be a transition throughout the period of their tenure in the Cayman Islands.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Member would have no trouble with me about moving the Governor wherever they can find an appropriate place, because it has been talked about for years; but that takes time, and the toilet situation, wherever they are located... I don't think you could put them in front of the Governor's

house, but would put them somewhere that can be utilised properly, because it is a fact.

I've been invited there to see what happens. Women, especially, have nowhere to go. It is bad enough for everybody, but especially women—and especially our visitors who go there and don't have a toilet facility, so I hope the plan both Ministers just announced will move quickly, because to me it is an emergency.

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, thank you for your indulgence.

Just a quick comment. I am not sure who was responsible for building the new restroom block at the Seven-Mile Public Beach, but there is absolutely zero ventilation in the bathroom. There are no windows—nothing. It gets extremely hot during the summer and people have had incidents in there. There is also nowhere for persons to wash their feet off and the bathroom is right where they get onto the buses, so they actually put their feet in the basins.

The parks and recreation staff that cleans the place then have to get all of the sand out of the basin—I suspect you will have plumbing issues in the near future because of the amount of sand going into the basin. Just something for future consideration when future blocks are being built.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Planning.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, I rise to take on the considerations the Member just mentioned about the bathroom block, and to bring attention that if it is a new block, it was not done under our tenure but we have no problem doing what we have to do to resolve the problem.

NO. 10

UPDATE ON YEAR TO DATE NUMBERS FOR STAY-OVER AND CRUISE TOURISM AND ESTIMATES FOR 2023

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to ask question number 9 [*sic*] standing in my name, to the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Transport: Can the Honourable Minister update the House on the year to date numbers for stay-over and cruise tourism as well as the updated estimates for 2023?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Minister of Tourism and Transport: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The answer: The year to date arrivals for the period of 1st of January 2022 to 31st of October 2022:

- Stay-over arrivals: 202,230 persons. This equates to 49 per cent of the visitor arrivals for the corresponding period of 2019.
- Cruise passenger arrivals: 509,205 passengers. This represents 35 per cent of the cruise passenger arrivals recorded in 2019.

Madam Speaker, in respect to the estimated projections for 2023, the Ministry of Tourism has established a target of 70 per cent of the 2019 visitor arrivals, which equates to 351,917 stay-over visitors. Cruise passenger arrivals for 2023 are forecasted at 1.46 million passengers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

I wonder if the Minister could tell us... just looking through the data, particularly with regard to the 1.46 million forecasted cruise passengers for 2023 visitors, if I try to project through to the end of this year for cruise passengers, it looks like next year there would be pretty close to a doubling of arrivals from where we are likely to end up in 2022. However, I recall there was a story in the press recently regarding the cruise ship companies, whereby they will not tender their largest class vessels; and we are forecasting arrivals to be somewhere in the region of around 750-odd thousand visitors next year? Am I getting this wrong?

I am just wondering in terms of additional capacity that is likely to come online next year in order to allow for the numbers to get where we are projecting them to be.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for the question to give clarity to the industry as to the projections for next year.

The Member is correct to say that there were some publications as to a decline in the number of cruise passengers due to the two major cruise lines, being Disney and Royal [Caribbean] deciding not to have some of their ships stop in Grand Cayman. As a result, there is a projection of just over 25 per cent drop in the 2019 numbers, which ultimately means

that we would have 75 per cent of the 2019 numbers, 2019 being the benchmark that we're using. The honourable former Minister did a great job having the threshold that high, so that's the mark that we're using. We still believe we will be able to meet the revenue targets and passenger targets in respect of next year's budgeted projections. Hopefully that answers the Member's question.

It is concerning, as similar reductions in numbers are projected in 2024 also, due to the lack of pier offerings for these mega ships which they have said they cannot tender. We are working very hard within the Ministry and the Department of Tourism to ensure that we work both on and with partners in the cruise line industry with smaller ships, to see whether we can increase stops at Grand Cayman port. We have already seen the smaller-class ships like Holland America add three stops to the number they did in 2019. Three stops, in comparison to a 20-ship-stop reduction from Royal [Caribbean] or Carnival, is a substantial difference, but we are still going to make our mark.

I am also happy to say with the Average Daily Rate (ADR) being much higher than the 2023 projections for stay-over we will surpass, or we hope to surpass, our projections on the revenue as well as the stay-over perspective to make up for any shortfalls if we did have any. I don't expect to have any in that respect, but I am happy to say that I have had conversations with the former Minister, [and] we'll be working together, just from a correspondence perspective, on what is the best way to attack this problem—not making tourism a political football, because it is a major pillar of our economy and we are all in this together. Try to figure out ways to incentivise the cruise lines to continue, and not go too far down this line by reducing the number of stops by each cruise line.

We are aware of some of the [cruise] lines' decision to make reductions, due to transitioning to the bigger ships, but it has been decided by the people that they do not want a pier. We are respecting the people's wish in that respect, and as a result, we will do our best with whatever is available to us and continue to support, market, encourage and incentivise cruise lines to stop at the Grand Cayman port.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam Speaker, I think probably all of the North American [air] carriers have returned to Cayman at this time. I wonder if the Minister could let us know whether they have reinstated all of the frequencies with regard to the routes they are flying.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

With respect to the question posed by the Leader of the Opposition, the frequency isn't exactly

back to what it was supposed to be in 2019, but our expectations are that we will get back to those frequencies in the first quarter of next year.

As the Leader of the Opposition may be aware, the aviation industry is still grappling with a shortage of pilots. You can see some airlines are slowly ramping back up, and that is based on the routes that are most successful for them. For example, as Cayman became more and more attractive as a place to fly to based on Expedia and other travel online options, they keep an eye on those data points and see that there is a demand for certain places. Thus, with the limited resources of pilots that they have, they choose the most successful routes they can fly [to] that fill the plane the most. They do that in brackets—by way of a three to four-month bracket—and then they do another schedule based on seasons. The former Minister would know this.

As a result, when we first opened, because we opened so late in August, they had already created their bracket with the availability of pilots they had at that time. I am happy to say that they all have given indications that, as a matter of fact, based on the high demand for Cayman, they intend to *surpass* the number of flights into the jurisdiction. I am also happy to announce that Sun Country [Airlines] will be coming back to Cayman very soon.

I will be offering a statement later next week to update on the state of play within the tourism industry which will relate to aviation, and cruise, to give a clearer picture with the most updated information in that respect.

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, earlier I mentioned the tourism accommodation tax being \$2.4 million ahead of budget year to date despite the late start. In the grand scheme of these numbers, can the Minister provide, briefly, how has Cayman Airways been performing? In particular, I would like to get an update on how the Los Angeles (LAX) route has been performing. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Deputy Premier for the question. I had intended to give all of this information in a statement later on, but it is always good to double down for emphasis because there is still more information that I am proud to let the public know next week.

With respect to the question that was posed, Cayman Airways is doing amazing. We have had a record history month in October, when we had the highest number of sales in the Company's history. I

am so proud of the managing staff and the Board, for working really hard to get the national airline back up and running, and making as much profit as possible within the remit of its responsibilities. Though we know that Cayman Airways makes a loss heavily because we subsidise it on the basis of our routes to our sister Islands, which is very important to us, it is good to know they are making some good money, particularly based on the number of seats in October.

As a result, the two per cent that was offered to the civil service and the \$150 for the three months of July, August and September, were also awarded to the Cayman Airways staff. I intend to bring another paper that will bring Cayman Airways in line with the Public Authorities Law to allow the staff to be at the same salary scale as the civil service in the respective roles—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: To increase the salaries for the staff at Cayman Airways, which I do believe they are overdue for it, particularly for the stewardesses that dealt with COVID and the fear of COVID and were still servicing trade and leisure and business travel when no other airlines other than Cayman Airways and British Airways were flying. I can't wait to get that paper approved and even if we don't get it approved in time for Christmas, it would be retroactive to the first of this month (December).

The second part of your question...

[Pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Yes, Madam Speaker, the LAX update.

I am happy to say that we are steadily going at a rate of just under 70 per cent which is expected due to the fact that there was a small budget for marketing and the LAX zone is a very expensive market. The budget that was proposed to us to be confident in its success was a very high one that we could not justify at the time, with all the difficulties that were going on. However, we found unique ways to partner with stakeholders like Cayman Finance, the film industry and, obviously, our tourism partners like the hoteliers and so forth, to work together to find the same level of volume of exposure and marketing and the travel component of Caymanians who want to go to the West Coast.

With that, we are seeing a good steady flow up into the first quarter of next year. It is my intention, if things continue to go down the road that they are and we are in a better financial position, to go back to my colleagues and say, *now that things are doing a little bit better, can we award the Department of Tourism the necessary funds to make sure we maintain the exposure necessary for Cayman Airways to be relevant in that very expensive market.* We have seen

indications within the industry that it's bound to be very successful for the full year, potentially even going into another flight another day of the week, ultimately offering two flights per week.

Madam Speaker, I think that answers the two questions posed to me by the Honourable Deputy Premier.

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister mentioned such a record or banner month of October—best in the company's history. I wonder if he could give us the reasons, the factors, that contributed to such success in October.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, [I am happy to give such detailed information to the Member in writing](#), but I can give you the assumption that people just wanted to fly in and out of Cayman Islands on our national airline.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Member for Cayman Brac East. *[sic]*

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman: Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman but—

The Speaker: I am sorry; so sorry.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I am happy to work with my colleague in East as well.

Madam Speaker, first I would like to congratulate the Minister of Tourism on being awarded this year's Minister of Tourism for the region.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I told him yesterday that I was very proud. He follows in my footsteps as being the Minister of Tourism for the region as well, but what we made sure to understand in our conversation, was that support, the team that backs you up, is extremely important. I think the recognition of the Cayman Islands (Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman), of how we do business and operate our tourism, is through that award. I am sure every colleague of yours in this House is very happy and very proud.

Now with those pleasantries, Madam Speaker—

[Laughter]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: I have a couple of questions. I will start off with the one on cruise [tourism]. Not too long ago there was a report asked to be prepared on a cruise policy. Can you update us on when it will be available, or have you got any input on where they are with that report?

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to answer the Honourable Member from Cayman Brac West's question, the report that he is referring to was a review of cruise tourism and transport that I requested. We have split the two reports and separated the one on transport, which I think the Honourable Member may be aware it is currently in process with the firm Deloitte.

I hope to have that report back in the first quarter of next year, hopefully by the first or second week of February, to update the public and this honourable House with respect to its findings. The other part was to figure out the best-balanced number and figure for cruise on the basis that the people of the Cayman Islands found that cruise numbers were too much and had negative effects on the environment by way of traffic, usage of our natural environments like Stingray City, our beaches, and so forth.

Madam Speaker, we don't have that issue anymore due to what I highlighted earlier where, unfortunately, there is a projected reduction in the heavy numbers, of between 20 to 25 per cent for next year and, potentially, over 25 per cent for 2024—which was the reason for the report in the first place: to better balance the exact, sustainable number that is healthy for our community. Where people can make money and is not too heavy on our environment.

Now we are at the point where we are just trying to not go any lower than the numbers that are projected for next year and the year after, so I have put a hold on the review that was going to be done because the relevance of solving that problem is not as top-priority now. Now it's about the numbers that we are getting... I wouldn't say they are good enough, I just know that they're not causing the problems that ignited the report in the first place, so to spend, you know, \$100,000 on a report where there is no longer a problem, didn't make "valuable" sense—so that's on hold.

As I said to the Member in private, I am trying to find out strategic ways of balancing out the cruise industry and use our leverage, where we can, to encourage cruise lines to come in the slower months knowing that they want to be here on the peak months. On those negotiations, I am happy to say that the honourable former Minister has agreed to work with me on finding the best strategy. There is nothing wrong with taking leadership from good, wise, former members who have the experience in it. Ultimately,

our goal is to ensure that the cruise industry is sustainable and maintained.

Is there a real fear of loss of business for cruise? Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, I have to say yes. I know for certain the question of whether a pier was supposed to be built or not is now probably being rethought by some members of our community because we are starting to see the realities of what was perceived at the time [as] a "scare tactic" of reduction of numbers. The simple truth is that the perceived scare tactic is now a reality; as for next year we will get close to 25 percent loss in the numbers from 2019. I know it's not the best news in the world, but I always want to be honest with the people of this country on the reality, and we can decide what we want to do with that.

I have been investigating different strategies to increase the numbers by focusing on our Sister Islands. This honourable House and members of the public may be aware of a major development for Cayman Brac, by a huge investor within our community, called Project Zeus. There are great opportunities within that project's layout. If successfully implemented, I have already gotten preliminary commitments from cruise lines that would be willing to stop at Cayman Brac if that project follows through.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I am looking forward to having a meeting in Cayman Brac in the early part of next year—with the blessings of both of the Members who represent Cayman Brac—to talk to the Cayman Brac people about further investing in tourism in the Sister Islands. The reason I say that, Madam Speaker, is because the western side of Grand Cayman is fully booked. We have developments in the pipeline and once they come online, I think we would have gotten almost to capacity on the West coast.

It is time for us to start looking to the eastern districts and the Sister Islands. Cayman Brac offers a rather unique product that is totally different from both Grand Cayman and Little Cayman. Cayman Brac offers a unique opportunity in that it has the necessary infrastructure already in place, as well as it offers different products for an adventurous experience, and that's why within our department and within our Ministry we want to start focusing heavily on Cayman Brac.

I didn't want to make this announcement earlier, but we have already seen agreements coming down the line where a national flag carrier from the United States will be flying directly into Cayman Brac as opposed to—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: As opposed to what is being proposed now, where they have to fly to Grand Cayman and then we service them to Cayman Brac. I

think Cayman Brac has a strong-enough infrastructure, people and investment, to carry its own product, and I hope to get it to that point, as Cayman Brac needs an injection into their own economy.

I believe, with the current airport redevelopment we can attract more airlines, as well as the potential for the Zeus project to be completed. In the next 2 to 3 years, Cayman Brac could be not having to depend on Grand Cayman at all. That's exactly where I hope to get Cayman Brac to, so it is my attention, with the blessings of both Members, to go to Cayman Brac and talk to the Cayman Brac people about being willing to receive that forward movement because only with the blessings, and the want, and the acceptance of the Cayman Brac people can it be successful.

The Speaker: The Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Minister for the response. I believe the answer on the cruise policy report is that it has been stopped?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Okay. There are many good news there, I believe it is American Airlines that is looking into a direct flight.

I have a couple other questions: the Zeus Project, which I am in favour of, can you tell me when that will be approved by your Cabinet, to go forward?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, the answer: I can't say because I am not privy to the details as it doesn't fall within my Ministry, but [I can ensure to get those details to you](#). I have not seen it on the agenda before Caucus. To confirm, I am also in support of the project but as to where our authority lies, it's for the whole Caucus together because, though we can have a say on whether we support it, it doesn't necessarily mean we have any say in whether it moves forward or not.

They are a private developer so, once they meet the laws of the Cayman Islands with respect to it from an environmental and planning perspective, I don't think it (and I reservedly say this) is our place to intervene in that, unless they are asking [for] something from the Government. As far as I am aware the investor has not asked the Government specifically for anything, therefore we don't need to be involved, but I would like to announce my support for it.

I am hoping that other Members would see the benefit for Cayman Brac from a tourism and food security port perspective, because what is being offered there, based on what I have heard from the de-

velopers themselves, is there is a component where cargo will be facilitated which, as the honourable House is aware, the Port Authority falls under my remit as well. I asked the Port Authority to meet with the developers to see [how] imports to the Cayman Islands can benefit, and the preliminary response is that the Port Authority management team is in support of it as well.

It gives more food importation security to the Cayman Brac people because, you know, we have heard so many times how Cayman Brac can't get food because of bad weather. This would eliminate that potential problem.

The Speaker: Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, again, I thank the Minister for the response. I thank him for his support for the Zeus Project, and again, I agree with him. What I have been reliably informed is that what is being waited for is Government's permission for him to move forward, so thank you for how you outlined that.

Madam Speaker, he talked about the development of tourism for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman. I want to ensure that he's aware that nothing can happen in those two Islands until we get proper airlift, and we are struggling, *struggling*, with the capital to get proper airlift right now. Little Cayman can't go any further. I'm sure you are aware that the two planes that service [there], they have now come back and removed some of the seats so what started off with a Twin Otter that carried 18 passengers, is now down to 12 passengers. That's what our small island is facing.

The airlift into Cayman Brac was structured with two 34-seaters for frequency, frequency, frequency, but with the pilot shortage, schedule changes, they are not able to run and put the seats in place in the timely manner that's needed, so I ask you to put that on an important part of your list. The only way we can move forward is with the support and the improvement of the schedule from Cayman Airways into the Brac and Little Cayman. My—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker, I do apologise for cutting the Member short, but I think he will be happy that I did. I am happy to announce that the Ministry is bringing a paper to Caucus to get support to purchase another Twin Otter to address this problem.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: It has been brought to my attention that the situation is dire by way of what you have highlighted with respect to maintenance schedules. God forbid, if we had one small problem with the

one that is currently working while the maintenance for the other one is happening, it puts us in a very difficult place that affects our tourism brand heavily.

I give an example which I am certain that you are aware [of] where we had that exact problem—a minor warning, but as you know, per protocol, if there are any warnings, the plane has to be grounded. As a result, we had a large contingent of visitors who had to leave Cayman Brac in order for them to catch their flight to the North American market. Boats had to be driven to Little Cayman to pick them up and carry them to Cayman Brac to get them on the flight. Such experiences leave a lasting negative impression with customers. At 46 per cent, we have the highest return visitor percentage in the Caribbean, and situations like that can affect the return rate, which keeps our tourism product sustainable over the decades to come—when I'm probably not here—so we are mindful of that.

I have spoken to the Honourable Premier who has given me preliminary support, and to the Deputy Premier with respect to getting it as a capital injection—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Equity injection, which will not hurt the Government's bottom line, so it is practically approved, so to speak. I think I'm confident to say that my colleagues will give me the support in that. It is just a matter of the Parliament's proceedings why the paper has not been brought, but my team at Cayman Airways have already been told to start the preparations looking to purchase.

You are also aware, based on your former experience that Twin Otters keep their value, so they are a good thing to buy because, even if we switch to a different type of plane in the next year or two, they can be sold at the drop of a hat. It is an easy decision to make, and I look forward to being able to announce that soon for you.

The Speaker: I will allow one final supplemental. The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Not a supplementary Madam Speaker, but to expand, as I recognised that the question from the Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman ventured into the economic development domain.

What I can say to the honourable Member and other colleagues in this House from my portion of the Finance and Economic Development Ministry, is that the Government recognises there are certain infrastructural developments that need to be undertaken in Cayman Brac to allow it to arrive at its full potential with the support of the Member for Cayman Brac East who is also the Minister of Education, District Administration and Land.

She actually brought a paper, which was approved, [for us] to look at increasing the accommodations within Cayman Brac in order to have major capital projects because there is an issue with housing for workers on the island. We found that if people left Grand Cayman to go do major works in Cayman Brac, and you need a good crew for major capital development, they would end up eating the entire tourism room stock in Cayman Brac, which, in essence, would set it back so, in principle, the Government has approved the funding to actually expand multi-use/multi-purpose housing within Cayman Brac.

Again, I want to thank the Minister for Education for bringing it. Now we can have facilities in place that can house large numbers of workers because, with all the inflationary pressures, if people have to be going back and forth between Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac it drives up Brac construction costs further. The Government is actually looking at its own economic development plan to ensure Cayman Brac does achieve its full potential. We think it's high time that Cayman Brac has the opportunity and the infrastructure in place to actually achieve its full potential. The people of Cayman Brac are no different from anyone else in the Cayman Islands.

Just as how I, as a Member from the Eastern district would want development within the Eastern districts to diversify our entire product, there is a renewed emphasis in Cayman Brac in that regard, so the Member will be pleased to know that this is millions of dollars of additional funding that we have set aside, separately, to allow other major projects in Cayman Brac.

The Government struggles in terms of our own capital development in Cayman Brac and again, the cost goes up by having workers traveling back and forth, so as the Minister may have mentioned we are looking at larger plane to get more traffic into Cayman Brac. I think that is something the House should be aware of. Many of those plans will be revealed in full to everyone at a later date, but it is something that we are consciously working on.

The Speaker: Honourable Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman. Just one final question.

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I understand it is the final question and thank you for allowing me to ask it.

Very good news. Obviously, congratulations to my colleague from Cayman Brac East for the paper that was just explained. I know it is Christmas, and we have certainly had many good gifts here in the last 30 minutes.

I would also ask the Minister and the Government to look into changing out the Saabs. We had looked at the ATR and the dashes (the 50 to 60-seaters) to look for that scheduling and continue with

the improvement of the air schedule for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman because, again, as we all agree, if we don't sort out the lift problem, it doesn't make any sense to invest the millions that you just talked about.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister for Tourism.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that you want to wrap up this segment of the order paper, so I will try to be as quick as I possibly can.

The former Minister will be aware that we currently operate three different types of planes which causes Cayman Airways to have a number of expenses: three different maintenance crews, three different types of parts... For the type of short and long distance offerings that we have, we ideally only need two types of aircrafts, and I think that's what the Member was trying to say.

How we get there, also depends on what the good people of Little Cayman want, because we have had some feedback by way of the airport redevelopment. The team that is putting together the report on the updated airport plan for us to look at have gone and talked to the people of Little Cayman, and they have said that they don't want much changed. That balance of economic growth and the will of the people is one that is important to try to set the right way.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Something we are committed to with respect to the Little Cayman model, which is holding up the potential for us to just go to two types of planes, is the airport. What I can happily say, is that the Government is minded to try to resolve the problem of the airport in Little Cayman.

If we have an updated airport in Little Cayman, we can move to more reliable flights in, and potentially go down to just two types of planes. Obviously, the fleet of 737-8 Maxes that we have now is one for sure. What we will go into then for these short flights to and from Little Cayman and Cayman Brac to Grand Cayman and within the three Islands, can be determined after we get to that point, but I agree that it makes more feasible financial sense to focus on something that carries a larger number so we can facilitate tourism visitors into those markets in a more reliable way.

I want the Member to know that I am aware of it and I am happy to speak more with him privately about it, as he not only is the former Minister of Tourism, but in the tourism industry as well as the Representative for the Sister Islands along with our Minister of Education. The wealth of knowledge in his mind is something I am happy to receive, and take guidance from, to help develop the best product [going] forward

for Cayman Brac, Little Cayman and the Cayman Islands.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: None.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**The Deputy Governor,
Hon. Franz I. Manderson**

The Speaker: I have given leave to the Honourable Deputy Governor to give a personal explanation.

The Deputy Governor, Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Madam Speaker, thank you.

Madam Speaker, just over three weeks ago, while at the gym, I suffered what the doctors diagnosed as a minor heart attack. Madam Speaker, I have to say it did not feel like a minor heart attack; persons describe a heart attack like having an elephant sit on your chest. Truthfully, it felt worse than that.

Madam Speaker, I was lucky; thanks to the quick and capable actions of the medical professionals at the HSA and Doctors Hospital, and with the grace of God, my condition was quickly diagnosed and I was provided with world-class care which allowed me to return to work yesterday.

Madam Speaker, twelve years ago I made a decision to live a healthier lifestyle. I walk regularly, attend the gym; I try and stay away from unhealthy food and drink; I do not smoke or drink alcohol. I believe these actions saved my life, however, I have not been as consistent as I should be with living a healthy lifestyle—I did not pay attention to my blood pressure or get regular check-ups.

I take this opportunity to once again urge members of our community to pay attention to their health. Don't wait for a heart condition to occur before you take preventative action. Madam Speaker, we as a community need to eat healthier food on a regular basis; choose a diet of vegetables, fruit and lean meats, and stay away from fried and fatty foods.

Madam Speaker, regular exercise is critical to good health. When I talk to persons about the importance of regular exercise that increases your heart rate. I often hear that familiar response, "*I don't have time to exercise.*" Madam Speaker, I think we can all really find the time to exercise; a 45-minute walk in the morning before work or after work can be done, if we really, really, want to. If you live in the Eastern districts and you spend an hour in traffic at 5pm, why not bring your exercise clothes to work, and walk for an hour

after work. Take part in the many 5K charities that usually take place on Sunday mornings.

Madam Speaker, I will redouble my efforts to live a healthy lifestyle. I will work with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, and the [Cayman] Heart Fund and other charities, to promote good health. As leaders of our beloved Islands, let us lead by example. I recommend that Cabinet and Parliament offer one healthy meal option to Members and that we take part in regular exercise and get regular check-ups and physicals.

I know the Deputy Premier has been working with his team on obtaining physical check-ups for civil servants, and I want to record my thanks to him for his leadership in this regard. I also ask that the community joins in this initiative so that we can all enjoy a long and healthy life.

Madam Speaker, I wish to offer a heartfelt thank you to the many hundreds of persons who offered their well wishes and prayed for my recovery. I was extremely touched by the outpouring of care and concern, especially from the civil service who I have the honour to lead. I want my fellow civil servants to know that I felt your love and support, and it was so good to be back to work yesterday.

Madam Speaker, a special thank you, to His Excellency the Governor, for his strong support and care for my recovery. Thanks also to the Premier and Cabinet colleagues for their prayers and support.

Madam Speaker, I also want to record my profound thanks to my senior leadership team, especially Chief-Officer Gloria Mcfield-Nixon, who did an outstanding job acting during my absence. Special thanks to my family, especially my wife Nuvia for her love and support—she confiscated my phone and forced me to really switch off and focus on my recovery and it has really, really, helped me.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Governor Hon. Franz I. Manderson: Finally, Madam Speaker, I give thanks to God for his mercies and blessings.

I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Governor. I, along with the Members of the Government and Opposition, along with all of the Parliament staff are happy to have you here with us today, in good health. Thanks be to God.

I have also given leave to the Honourable Deputy Premier to give a personal explanation.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders,
Deputy Premier

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. I am glad that my colleague from Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman raised this issue.

I recognise, Madam Speaker, and I don't need to say it to Members of this honourable House, that politics can be quite a dark business. What we deal with on a daily basis some members of the public will never understand—and that's fine; but there are certain times, Madam Speaker, when there is light. I really and truly want to use this opportunity to publicly congratulate my colleague and my brother in the struggle, the Minister for Tourism and Transport and Elected Member for George Town Central.

Madam Speaker, when I read the article in the Caribbean Journal that reads, *The Caribbean Travel Awards 2023* and says: "*Caribbean Tourism Minister of the Year: Kenneth Bryan, Cayman Islands*", I was deeply moved and proud.

The article reads, Madam Speaker: "**The Cayman Islands is already nearing its pre-pandemic tourism totals, a rather impressive feat since the destination was one of the final Caribbean destinations to reopen for tourism after the onset of the pandemic. Leading the destination's rebirth has been Minister Bryan, who skilfully navigated the balance of public health and the economy and deftly led Cayman's phased reopening process. Now, Cayman is on the cusp of eclipsing its all-time records in 2023, with a focused, sustainability-minded growth push spearheaded by its top tourism official.**"

Madam Speaker, the reason this moved me on a personal level, why I have to get up and say it in the House: There were many nights when Minister Bryan and myself, as newly elected members sitting in the Opposition, would be up 'til 12/1 o'clock at night talking, planning, and looking at ways in which we could make this country better. I remember the night we were out in his yard, leaning on the back of his truck and we were talking about tourism and where we would like to see it go and you know, we discussed things like expanding to the LAX route, looking at opportunities in South America, et cetera.

The passion and zeal that Minister Bryan has brought... Every time I would call him, he would always say big brother or whatever. I guess, as the big brother in this regard I can honestly say, to see where he has come and where he has moved and while in politics really makes me proud—and again, I really want to thank the Honourable Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman for bringing it up.

To be elected Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation—and this—in such a short time, bodes well for Cayman.

Kenneth: Respect.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: None.

I was going to say that we suspend for lunch before we go into any other business but, before we take the suspension, I want to advise Members that the East End Primary School children love their MP so much, that they reached out and asked for permission to sing Christmas carols for the Members of Parliament on the Parliament's steps at 1.30pm. Inviting everyone to come out to the front steps, to enjoy the Christmas carols sung by our students.

We have now reached the hour of 12:40. The House will now suspend for lunch until 2pm.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Just to be clear. The students will be outside at 1:30.

Proceedings suspended at 12:45 p.m.

Proceedings resumed at 2:34 p.m.

The Speaker: Proceedings are now resumed.

OTHER BUSINESS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Private Member's Motion No. 7 of 2022-2023 Implementing the Recommendations in the 2020 Report from the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation

The Speaker: The Elected Member for George Town East, the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 7 of 2022-2023 standing in my name, which is a Motion on Implementing Recommendations on the 2020 Report from the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation, which reads as follows:

WHEREAS in June of 2020, the then MP for Prospect, Austin Harris, presented a report to the Government with recommendations by the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation;

AND WHEREAS the recommendations sought to help alleviate some causes of traffic

problems, including the large numbers of old automobiles being imported monthly;

AND WHEREAS the COVID Pandemic stopped the recommendations in the report from being progressed;

AND WHEREAS the traffic situation continues to worsen and negatively impact the lives of citizens;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Government consider as a matter of urgency reviewing the recommendations in the report and publishing a response to the recommendations setting out which recommendations will be implemented.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder to the Motion?

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

Madam Speaker, I rise to second Private Member's Motion No. 7 of 2022/2023 - Implementing the Recommendations in the 2020 Report from the Committee and Vehicle Imports and Transportation, moved by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and Elected Member for George Town East.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate.

Does the mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yes, thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, at the outset, I crave your indulgence and ask your permission to Table the Report of the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation in this honourable House.

The Speaker: So ordered.

[Pause]

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

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I ask for Members to be provided with a copy.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, in February 1967, the New Yorker published an essay by philosopher Hannah Arendt entitled *Truth and Politics*. One of the themes of the essay was that even in free democratic societies we have developed a habit of turning unwelcome factual truths into matters of opinion. We can see this phenomenon being played out in politics across the world

today, most recently, particularly in the United States, the unwelcome fact that an election has been lost has become a matter of political opinion.

Today, we are here to discuss traffic solutions, Madam Speaker, a topic that when discussed, can move from factual truths to opinions at the drop of a hat. I say that, Madam Speaker, because Cayman does have a traffic problem. That statement does not itself qualify as factual truth, but I believe that we in this Parliament must accept it as such. Only if we accept that Cayman's traffic problem is real and urgent, can we move the debate on how we should solve that problem and we should seek solutions that have as a genesis, some expertise rather than mere opinion, and this is the premise behind my Motion before Parliament today.

The Motion is very straightforward, Madam Speaker. It simply asks the Government to pick up and progress the work done by the previous Administration to identify and implement potential solutions to Cayman's traffic problems. It takes as a starting point, the work done by the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation established by the last Progressives-led Government.

That Committee, with public and private sector expertise, was ably led by the then Member of Parliament for Prospect, Austin O. Harris, who presented the Committee's work to the Government in June, 2020. The recommendations were also widely covered in the local media, and I suspect that every Member would have some knowledge of the work of the Committee and the recommendations. As the Motion notes, the Progressives-led government did not take the committee's recommendations further due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, the work we needed to do to protect the Islands from the virus and to mitigate the impacts of the drastic measures that were necessary rightly became the focus of all of us in Government; there was little bandwidth available, for other problems. Secondly, those anti-COVID measures themselves served temporarily to ease the traffic pressures, as lockdowns and other restrictions significantly reduced the need to travel. The problem was, therefore, less pressing than it had been. This was a ball that we could afford to take our collective eye off of while we dealt with the immediate threat of the virus; however, Madam Speaker, as Cayman's economy has opened up the traffic problems blighting Grand Cayman re-emerged.

Cruise passenger numbers remain well down from their peak levels but, even without the traffic that those tourists generate, Grand Cayman experiences significant levels of congestion on any given day. The chaos and disruption caused by the disastrous failure to plan properly for the Pirates' Fest road closures may have thrown the problem into stark relief, but the drudge of the commute has become a daily reality for too many Caymanians.

The chaos of Pirates Fast has also illustrated how vulnerable our road network is, to any disruption; however, it is more than just the current Administration's lack of judgment and planning that can cause such problems. Road traffic accidents, flooding, and storm damage can affect traffic movement significantly. We must now face the problems of traffic congestion and we must find the solutions the country needs.

Of course, there are actions already underway that will make a real difference. Across the last two Progressives-led Governments, we invested significantly in the nation's key infrastructure, including enhancements to the highway network. I will leave it to my George Town North colleague to speak about the work we did on road infrastructure and its importance, but the point is that work on the road network to reduce congestion was begun.

You would have noted, Madam Speaker, that my Motion does not call on the Government to simply implement the ten key recommendations made by the Committee. There are three significant reasons why we, in the Opposition, do not think it would be appropriate.

Firstly, as the pandemic held up our progress in considering the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, it also changed the way our economy and society functions. Those changes will have a direct bearing on some of the Committee's recommendations.

Secondly, some of the recommendations need further refinement and development.

Finally, we recognise that some of the recommendations are controversial. The proposed changes need public discussion and debate regarding the design of the proposed solutions.

For those reasons, Madam Speaker, my Motion calls on the Government to "consider" the Committee's recommendations and publish a response to set out which proposals will be implemented. While I do not specify what actions the Government should take, I am clear that action is necessary. Indeed, I am certain that we all should be clear that action is needed. For that reason, the Committee's work should be viewed as a matter of urgency. If, as I hope, the Government supports the Motion, then I hope that in the Minister's response, he will indicate the timescale to which he will work. It should be perfectly possible for the Government to publish a response to the recommendations by the end of March next year.

Because I am not calling for the Committee's ten recommendations to be implemented as they stand, I do not propose to take up Parliament's time going through each of them in detail, however, Madam Speaker, I want to address what I see as the key principles behind the Committee's recommendations. If the increases in road network capacity are seen as measures to increase the supply of available road space, then most of the Committee's recommendations are best seen as measures that will reduce or

better manage the demand for road space. Before I talk briefly about these, I will mention the one recommendation that was aimed, specifically, at the supply side. This recommendation was aimed not at increasing capacity, per se, but better utilising the network's existing capacity.

Madam Speaker, the Committee recommended the introduction of reversible lanes on some of our major commuter routes. These are lanes where traffic may travel in either direction depending on the time of day so that more capacity is available for traffic going in the dominant direction. For example, a lane might be used by traffic flowing into George Town from the East in the morning, and then reversed to be used by vehicles travelling back out again to the East in the evening.

Madam Speaker, this solution has been put in place elsewhere in the world. For example, several commuter routes in Washington, D.C. utilise this approach. I am sure we all have been in countries, particularly the United States, where you see such taking place and we believe it can be implemented here in Cayman. This is one of the recommendations made by the Committee that requires more work into its practical application, but it is certainly worthy of consideration.

The Committee's nine other recommendations all target the achievement of a reduction in demand in one form or another. The most obvious and clear-cut means of doing so is to reduce the number of vehicles on our roads and that is the objective behind those recommendations by the Committee to limit the import of vehicles.

The Committee's research found that, as of January, 2020, there were over 75,000 vehicles on the official register with nearly 45,000 vehicles listed as active. According to the Committee's report, the year 2019 saw nearly 2,300 vehicles imported to Cayman, which represents around 464 vehicles every single month of the year, and we know that the issue of high vehicle imports has remained since the Committee's report in early 2020.

Bucking a clear international trend, even during the period of the pandemic, we saw a steady stream of car imports into Cayman's shores. Data from the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) showed that during 2020 the value of vehicle imports did not drop off as it did in many other countries, but instead remained almost identical to the 2019 level. Subsequently, as economic activity returned and pent up demand was released, the value of vehicle imports rose to nearly \$100 million during 2021—a rise of 26 per cent over the previous year. However, the most recently available data provided by the ESO showed that the value of imported passenger motor vehicles declined by 14.9 per cent in the second quarter of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021.

Time will tell, Madam Speaker, but my view is that this appears likely to be a return to the trend line

following the 2021 spike, rather than the start of any long-term reversal, and I know the Government agrees that this level of imports is at least partially to blame for the traffic problems that bedevil Grand Cayman.

In his statement taking responsibility for the traffic chaos that accompanied the Pirates Fest a few weeks ago, the Premier was clear that it was not only the actions of the Government and their failure to properly plan and communicate the road closures and diversions—

Point of Order

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker.

Point of Order, Ma'am. Is the Leader of Opposition saying that the Government was responsible for closing off the roads for the Pirates' Week Festival? Because we were not responsible for that. It was the Police Service, so he needs to get it right.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition

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

Madam Speaker, I can only go by what was said. I know the Premier got up and took responsibility for what happened. I mean, both the Pirates' Week activities and these road closures took place. I am only saying what I know and have heard with regard to it so, unless there is anything further, ma'am, I propose to continue.

The Speaker: Continue.

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

Madam Speaker, the Premier also said that the Government had to get on top of the unrestricted importation of hundreds of cars every month, if a proper solution to the problems of congestion is to be found. Madam Speaker, I agree. We all agree. The problem is that he has said this before and nothing has been done.

Right at the start of this Administration, one of the environmental initiatives the Premier announced his new Ministry would take was to reduce the number of second-hand cars imported, particularly from Japan—but to date, it seems quite obvious to us that nothing has been done to deliver on that objective.

Of course, we also heard from the Minister of Finance, who recently published the second quarter results. He spoke of the higher-than-expected revenues achieved, which included motor vehicle charges being \$5.3 million greater than budgeted due to the high volume of vehicle imports, so we see somewhat of a contradiction between what the Ministry is saying with regards to the continuing increases of import duties...

Point of Order

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Point of Order, Madam Speaker.

I am trying to ascertain from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, when did I say or state such in this honourable House. What date did I say that? I am curious. Thank you.

The Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: I don't think I said that you published or stated it in this honourable House. I said when he published the second quarter of financial results.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: When he published the Government's second quarter financial results—I will read from here—the Deputy Premier trumpeted the higher than expected revenues achieved, which included motor vehicle charges that were \$5.3 million greater than budgeted due to the high volume of vehicle imports.

Madam Speaker, this highlights the fact that we need to bring focus—

The Speaker: Excuse me, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Premier is asking whether you can clarify what report you are quoting him from.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: The Second Quarter Report and the statements that were released.

[Pause]

The Speaker: You may continue.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, this highlights the fact that we need to bring focus and clarity to the Government's thinking. By seeking an urgent formal response to the Committee's recommendations, we are giving PACT the opportunity, once and for all, to tell us whether they are serious about limiting car imports or not, and, if they are serious, what do they propose to do about it? While I believe limiting imports is an important step, it is not in itself the answer to our problems.

Firstly, even though we are importing cars at a seemingly extraordinary rate, reducing the rate will only have a marginal impact on the total number of vehicles on our roads for the foreseeable future. With tens of thousands of vehicles already here, reducing the rate of imports will only put a relatively small dent in the numbers on our roads.

Secondly, we need to beware of unintended consequences. If we limit imports, we may simply

mean that older vehicles which are less fuel efficient, less safe and more polluting will stay on our roads for longer than they otherwise might or would. Any action taken to limit imports must avoid such adverse impacts, or it could prove to be counterproductive. Limiting imports will make less of an impact than changing the way people make their travel choices. The Committee's recommendations address that issue in several respects. They suggest ways in which people might reduce the need for travel.

In these post pandemic times, I think we have all recognised that it is possible for more people to work from home or at least for part of the time. Simply put, if a regular office worker opts to work from home one day per week, that reduces their commute by 20 per cent. Similarly, meetings held virtually rather than face to face mean that staff do not need to travel to the same location and back. Car sharing or pooling arrangements also reduced the demand for road space.

I do not know of Cayman-specific research, but pre-pandemic, the United States' Census Bureau found that some three quarters of Americans drive alone to work every day while only 9 percent carpool. If Cayman's figures are in any way similar, and I firmly believe they are, the scope to get significant numbers of cars off our roads to significantly reduce peak congestion through car sharing schemes is obvious.

More use of school buses would eliminate those journeys that are made simply to take children to school. Members will know of parents who take their car each morning just to get their children to school. We only have to see the reduced congestion during the school holidays to understand the impacts of these journeys. Reducing home-to-school car use would therefore have a potentially significant impact on reducing peak loads on Cayman's overstretched road network.

The Committee also made other recommendations that would impact peak loading, such as staggered school start times and staggered or flexible working arrangements. The traffic is only really congested during peak hours and while the Committee's recommendations will need some careful planning, anything which can reduce or spread the loads that the network currently experiences during those hours would be welcome. I think I have demonstrated clearly that each of those has a role to play.

Finally, and most importantly, the Committee recommended the introduction of improved public transport arrangements for Grand Cayman. In a sense, the Government has already responded to this recommendation, as I am aware that the Minister has recently announced the tendering of a significant consultancy contract to look at the future public transport system for the Island but what puzzles me, Madam Speaker, is why is it only now that such a consultancy contract has been undertaken?

When we were in government, the Progressives committed to an overhaul of public transport to be led by a thorough appraisal of the options which would identify the best solution and how to it might best be implemented. We know, (because we led it), that the work had been done to commission the necessary review before the last election. Again, my colleague, the Deputy Opposition Leader will speak more about this, but when the Government took up office, an RFP [Request for Proposals] for a public transport review was complete and ready to go out.

Madam Speaker, I said at the start of my speech that we need to accept that Cayman has a traffic problem. As is clear from what I have said today, it is a complex problem and there is no single silver bullet solution that will resolve the problem.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Madam Speaker.

Point of Elucidation

The Speaker: The Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: I rise on a point of elucidation, if the Member would give away.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Give way for what?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: For clarity.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: For clarity on which point?

[Pause]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, as is clear from what I have said today, it is a complex problem and there is no single silver bullet solution that is going to resolve the problem. It's going to take a multifaceted approach. What we do know, however, is that continued failure to take any action at all, will simply make the matter worse.

The recommendations made by the Committee on vehicle imports and transportation are not a panacea either, Madam Speaker, but they are a good starting point from which a comprehensive solution could be designed. I'm therefore urging the Government to accept and support this Motion, and commit to responding urgently to all ten of the Committee's recommendations.

Madam Speaker, I thank you, for allowing me to present this Motion today.

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

speak? [Pause] If not, does the mover wish to exercise his right of reply?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: I didn't see you; I'm sorry, honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I am sure, from what I heard, that the Minister wanted to reply, but he had to step out a minute. Maybe you could give the Minister a chance to get back in, if that's the case.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I wasn't intending to speak on this topic but could not help but recognise the "storytelling" approach the Opposition has used for all their Motions, or opening speeches. It seems like every speech is one of fairy tales, quotes, and all kinds of stuff for emphasis which is good, as an Opposition style of politics. I was there, so I understand.

I'm going to try my endeavour best not to be too controversial or conflicting with the Opposition on this because I would at least like to think that the hope of the Opposition is to find a solution to something that is troubling our people. I want to believe that, but in the midst of it is a whole lot of politics. When I hear genuine attempts to help resolve the problem, I will accept it; [but] is the little *jab jab, jab jab* comments that force me to get to my feet. The good Minister from Cayman Brac [East], the Honourable Juliana O'Connor-Connolly tells me, *Ken, stay patient*, but these are the times when *unna* call me to my feet.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Leader of Opposition talked about factual truths and opinion. Madam Speaker, let's talk about factual truths and opinion. The factual truth is that traffic didn't just sneak up on us. The members on the opposite side had eight years—96 months.

Madam Speaker, some of the excuses that I heard, as to why they didn't follow through the recommendations were that COVID came around. I guess you can't walk and chew gum at the same time. Maybe because the Opposition Leader said that we should respond to all ten recommendations, but in the first part of his statement he said, to only take three. I am not sure what he is saying. I tried to get some clarity on it just to not call him out, but he wouldn't give way and I respected the Standing Orders.

Madam Speaker, he also used the excuse that COVID came and that's why they couldn't do the recommendations, but yet accused my Ministry as to why the late start of the Deloitte report which he recognised just now has been started. They forgot that we had to do the hard part of COVID, which was reo-

pening this country—so, *we didn't have to deal with that part too?* Madam Speaker, it is what I am saying, the politics about a serious issue.

Granted, I believe the Motion intends to get us to put full attention on traffic. We all recognise it. The Honourable Premier made a public statement saying we see the issue, but the Opposition Leader, Madam Speaker, also recognised that this issue didn't just happen the other day.

Madam Speaker, he talks about scattered school time. What happens if a parent has two kids going to different schools? As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I am certain I heard us talk about this option in this Parliament in the last administration, so I know there have been discussions about that.

Madam Speaker, I am glad that he recognised that simply stopping the importation of vehicles won't stop traffic tomorrow. If we stop every single car coming into this country for a full year, the cars that are here are going to still be here. The truth is, that over many, many decades in this country we failed to plan, eight years of which this Opposition group was in charge.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, we had the opportunity to put in a public transportation system about which they said, *oh we had the RFP waiting*. Why didn't they issue it? Why did they wait until I came to be the Minister for Public Transport to issue it?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Because of COVID? *Come on man!* Well, the truth is, the RFP has been issued and I know they have been contacted to give their input. I made sure that the Deloitte report said, *"go and talk to the Opposition so they can give their input; we're all in this problem together, so I want to hear their views"* but they won't talk about that.

We recognise there is a problem, but the truth of the matter is, Madam Speaker, it is not only the fault of the Opposition or the current Government, but past administrators too, who weren't forward thinking [when] developing everything on the western side of this island; and I give credit to the former Premier for something which I think ten, twenty years from now he's going to get much more credit for: The school that was built in the eastern districts was to accommodate the transition and not [have] everything happening on this side of the island.

In order to reduce the percentage of people coming towards town every single day, you have to ensure the jobs they are going to are closer to the other side of the island, and Madam Speaker, the only way we can do that is diversify the job market to put them on the opposite side of the island, so not everybody is going in one direction in the morning. We have schools, supermarkets, and homes in the eastern districts, yet every single day they have to get in the car and come to town to work.

What we need to do now—and we are starting to talk about it within Government—is take some major departments of the civil service, because the Civil Service is the largest employer in this country, and move them to the East so those many good, hard working civil servants don't have to come to town because they have schools, houses, supermarkets and health facilities up there. They don't have to come this way. That's what we need to start talking about, but we are only one year and a half old; *unna had eight years, so give us a break*.

What they should be doing is supporting us with respect to our want and will to do the East-West Arterial. Why didn't you get up and say, on behalf of the Opposition, you support the Government's movement straight into Frank Sound? Get up and say that!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Eight years, nothing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: (Well, you stop too much. Stop with the red lights).

Madam Speaker, we want to deal with the transport problem. As the Minister for the Transport Unit, I spoke to my members. I said, *the first key domino that has to fall in order for us to truly tackle this problem is public transportation* and I think the Opposition Member knows this. Before you can make any moves that can have negative effects—which he acknowledged could potentially happen—you have to ensure you have a strong, reliable, efficient and cost-effective public transportation system and that's what we are trying to do.

The Government has already said, as the Minister for Public Transport, *get the report done. Let's look at the recommendations, we'll put the funding necessary to get one in place because after we do that, we can say, okay, I am sorry, but we're going to put some restrictions on driving—because you don't have an excuse anymore whereby you don't have something reliable to get to and from work, school or play*.

At this point, if we were to restrict (hypothetically) because I have heard Members of the Opposition say this, that they want work permit holders not to have a driver's licence—I wonder when Chamber of Commerce starts saying that they can't get their workers to work and the economy starts to go down, how are they going to respond to that? That's why some of these things haven't been implemented. You don't think we want to?

We have more non-Caymanians in this Country than we have Caymanians; if it was only Caymanians driving on these roads, then we wouldn't have a problem, but we can't operate just by feelings. I

thought the Opposition would at least give us the credibility and the time for the Deloitte report to come back, to see what the recommendations are; not just some recommendations by the former member for Prospect. Every one of these recommendations—I hate to say it, I am not trying to undermine it—are things that everybody has talked about and discussed, but they do not deal with the biggest issue, which is the public transportation system and roads.

I hope the Opposition Members are willing to support the Honourable Minister [with responsibility] for roads when he comes here for Finance Committee and says, *I need to spend more money to acquire the lands* that he did not acquire, for him to put the road through from Eastern Avenue to the Waterfront. The one that took four years of planning and still couldn't get done because they didn't want to buy the land when they were supposed to buy it.

When he comes here and says, *I want \$10 million so I can make the road easier, so downtown doesn't get locked up*, I hope they don't bring up any questions when he does that because I am going to remind this honourable House. They can't pick and choose when they want to beat up and talk about factual truths and opinions. Stop playing politics! We want to stop driving in traffic; I don't want to drive in it either.

Madam Speaker, we are trying to take a comprehensive approach to this. We will do the report, try to deal with the public transportation, we're devising a plan to work with the Honourable Deputy Governor on different agencies that can go east, so not as many people are working this way. We are also working on strategies to incentivise businesses, *stop building on the western side of the island, create some jobs over there so that so many people are not coming this direction*, but all these things don't happen overnight. We know this.

Is it just because it's a political win, because we had a major roadblock the other day, for you to get up and say, *oh, now we got something to beat them up on*, is that what this is?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Exactly, every Pirate's Week it happens. Come on, man!

We're going to be honest about the way we deal with politics. I told the Deloitte organisation, *please, go talk to the Opposition I don't want this to be a political football where only this Government has the opinion and the viewpoint*. I directed them, *go to the Opposition Leader, speak to them, make sure you speak to the former Minister [with responsibility] for roads and ask him his opinion so we all can have something to digest together*. That's not politics. That's trying to make sure all viewpoints are thought of.

You see what they're doing, playing politics. They know this is a problem. It was a problem when they had it too.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: (Yeah, Arden wasn't so bad, you know. Arden help your roads too, when you were in government).

Madam Speaker, I didn't want this to be political and I know—I hear the Honourable Member for Red Bay laughing at me, he's been doing that to me for over 5½ years, but that's okay. The Lord knows what he is doing. Hmm.

Madam Speaker, the Government is committed to working on all ideas and strategies. Are they coming in the timeliest way? Not to everybody's liking, but I want us all to remember too, we have a limited budget. If we come to this honourable House, God forbid if we don't have a surplus, those Members over there will be the first ones to say that my Deputy Premier isn't controlling the country's finances. I wish he would allow us to spend some more money so we can address some of these problems in a financial way, but we have to manage the budget too.

The country hasn't stabilised itself by way of trends within the financial services or planning or tourism. We're just starting to get ourselves back on our feet, so some decisions that we would like to make—God forbid, we had one little hurricane. If we didn't have a little \$20 million in the bank, to help around in the community if something goes wrong we'd be in trouble; and if we have a deficit, oh, they will have a field day with it so they cannot *have their cake and eat it too*.

You know what I want them to do, I want them to say that they're going to support \$30 million towards trying to resolve the problem. When I come to the Finance Committee in the next budget, and I say *I need X amount of money for buses to implement a proper transportation system*, I want to hear them criticise that too, because I will remind them of today (*what today is?*), the 8th December 2022.

Madam Speaker, I just asked this honourable House, for something as serious as traffic, they could have reached out to the Honourable Minister because I know they know him well. The Honourable Minister [with responsibility] for roads is probably the most lenient Member over here to work with the Opposition. Why didn't they just call him? They always talk about *oh, he did a road for me nice, nice, nice, nice*, what you want to beat him up for now? *Unna* couldn't call him and talk to him and say *Minister is there something we can do to help? Can we meet [or] whatever else?*

We're willing to do that. We're not like past administrations. We're willing to listen, we don't pretend like we know everything. I just said earlier today in this honourable House I am willing to listen to the

former Minister for Tourism because I am certain he didn't just grow those grey hairs yesterday, he earned them. Come on, man, stop playing politics, please.

Madam Speaker, that's all I am asking of the Members, let's work together if we potentially can be mature about it. We want to solve the problem too, we have things happening in the background, and we can say, *listen, this is what we are doing, expect this in the next a couple of months or the next year, this is where we are going to be*, that's it. Stop playing politics, because you're going to get called out. Remember you were there for eight years, we have been here a year and a half, let's not forget that because I'm going to keep on reminding you.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Members, I would like to take a brief suspension for fifteen minutes. I ask that you just stay close to your seats. We will resume in fifteen minutes.

Proceedings suspended at 3:21pm

Proceedings resumed at 3:39pm

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. Proceedings are now resumed. You may be seated.

I believe when we stopped, Members were speaking to the Motion.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Madam Speaker, just to follow up on this Motion.

Madam Speaker, I think the Motion is a little premature at this juncture, realising that the Opposition had their opportunity to provide the solutions during their term of office. While I recognise the previous administration's efforts to address the issue of car importation, the PACT Government is of the view that it is only one side of the problem. However, Madam Speaker, we are looking at a holistic approach, not just in isolation.

Earlier this year my colleague, the Minister of Tourism and Transport, engaged with a consultant to look into public transport. Madam Speaker, this approach is the way we have to look at this holistically, it is not just banning cars, it is also making sure that we have the right public transportation system so that our people—at least my people in North Side and Eastern districts too—can get to George Town at any time they feel like. They would be more willing to take the bus, if we had an on-time service that would be there right on the clock.

In other words, we cannot just think of limiting the vehicle importation and ownership without ad-

ressing the issues of public transportation. That is giving people access to alternative means of transport such as the public transportation as we highlighted earlier.

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition said that there are three points in the report that we should take, is that correct, sir? Madam Speaker, what he didn't do is list the three points that he suggested that we should have been taking. Why didn't he just come out and say which ones he recommends? The recommendation from the Opposition Leader said that the report needs more work, more consultation so, Madam Speaker, if he realises that it needs that, why did he come with a report today to say that we should be looking at this here now?

Madam Speaker, it is foolhardy to consider just one side of issues. This Government is looking at the challenges surrounding the traffic congestion in its entirety and the plan [is] to table these recommendations to this honourable House in the first quarter [of 2023].

Madam Speaker, my team in PAHI [Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure] has been working diligently, making sure that this report is ready to come to this honourable House and we realised that we have to do a lot of consultation with it, that's why we are taking our time with it. We realise that the traffic flow is a problem. I don't think anybody in this room realises how much traffic flow is [a problem] as I do. Every single morning I have to be up by 4:30am if I want to be in this building by 7 a.m. so I don't need anyone from that side of the road to come tell me about the traffic flow problems. We're living it!

Then, as my colleague also said, *what they should have come out and said is that they fully support us with the East West Arterial* and I am hoping that they are, because the Deputy Opposition Leader was the one who put up that nice, beautiful sign in Newlands that says *Coming Soon*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I agree with you, Sir Alden, but it was under your watch too, sir, so you let us, the people in the Eastern District down because, obviously, the traffic flow problem was a problem to you back then when you were the Premier over here! We won't blame that one on you. There're plenty more things we can blame on you; but not today. Don't come and tell us now about the traffic flow problem because you knew about it back then—but what did you do about it?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I am going to do something about it now, we are going to do something about it. We are not just going to put up the sign, we are going to try to complete the road and carry it through and fix

the bottlenecks that you should have been dealing with from day one.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: That's true, everybody in this House will get their chance, sir, but I don't want people to come out and mislead the public and think that I am not or the Government over here is not taking the traffic flow problem very seriously.

We know what our people go through coming from the eastern side of the island. We realised not only just the eastern side, but it's starting to become a traffic flow problem going back to the western side of the island too. We realise there are many roads in George Town that we have to do, we know that we have to look at the importation [and] banning of certain vehicles and cars coming in, we know the problems, we just want to make sure that when we bring the solution, it is the right solution for the country, not a halfway-approach solution. Not only that, but the people themselves will have the opportunity to voice and be a part of what that solution should be.

Madam Speaker, I really don't think I have to go too in depth into this, because it is something that affects all of us and I'm sure many people here are going to want to have their say on how they think it should be managed and what we should be doing.

What I do know, Madam Speaker, is that there is a problem and we are coming with the solution and we are hoping to have that in the first quarter of next year, and we are hoping too, that we can have the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report completed next year so that we can start to push this East West Arterial road down the middle. Let me not say the middle of the island, because some people think it's going straight through the middle, but one side of the island more or less.

Madam Speaker, we are talking about a road that was gazetted, I think, since Mr. Gilbert's days. Mr. Arden came in after him and tracked the whole road. I took two helicopter rides with the Premier and my colleagues to take a look at the traffic—how it flows and where the bottlenecks are. The Premier and I went on the first one to look at the East-West Arterial road, where it's going down the path. We see the problems. We have spoken with our colleagues, our partners, and tasked the team to ensure we come up with a solution because we realise how many people from the eastern side of the Island sit on the Government. Our team knows it is something we want to deliver.

I just hope that everyone here supports that road and supports us when it comes time to get the money for it because as far as I can tell you, I understand that people all the way up to Prospect and Red Bay complain about the traffic in the morning too. I don't want people to think that it's not bothering people that far. Every one of us coming out of town who goes to the eastern side is getting caught, either in the

morning or evening. We realise we are taking our time to release all of these bottlenecks. Some of our relief efforts are being held up by third parties, not the National Roads Authority (NRA), but it is a part of life when you are out there.

I can tell you one thing, we have not stopped pushing the NRA to make sure that they deliver what they have to deliver. I meet with the NRA team every Monday morning at 9 o'clock in my office for an update on every single thing that they're doing, to make sure that every week they are counting off exactly what they told me has been done from last week, and keeping a close eye on this road.

Madam Speaker, I welcome the document the Opposition Leader provided to us today, but seeing how close it is to what my team is providing, I wonder how the Opposition Leader has [such] good intel. I stand here this afternoon, and cannot support the Motion that he's bringing; but what I would tell him that when we're back in the first quarter of next year, if he sees something in the incoming Bill, he will have the opportunity to voice his opinion. I cannot support the Motion knowing the work my team has done and is already [doing] to bring this to the forefront.

Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting that particular Motion. The Members from the other side will have their opportunity to speak when we bring [the Bill] in January.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

I call on the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

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

I hear you, cuz, loud and clear; I heard you when you were speaking, too.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Joseph X. Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I hoped I wouldn't have to speak; that the Government would accept this Motion in good faith.

Madam Speaker, let me start by mentioning some of the statistics contained in the 2020 recommendations report from the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation. **“As of January 2020 a total of 44,906 vehicles were registered by the Department of Vehicle and Drivers' Licenses (DVDL). Over 75,000 vehicles were on the [official] register with approximately 44,906 vehicles listed as “active” leaving a further 30,094 vehicles in limbo and in various unknown states of disrepair.**

The largest percentage of registered vehicles [at the time] was 15 years old or 30 per cent; vehicles up to 5 years old represent 22 per cent,

and up to 10 years old represent 19 per cent,” Madam Speaker. “In 2011 new vehicles accounted for the most in overall imports by 62 per cent versus 28 per cent used” [vehicles being imported].

Fast forward to 2019, “the trend had shifted considerably showing the complete opposite with used vehicles accounting for the most in overall imports at 71 per cent compared to [the lesser] 29 per cent of new cars imported. Through December 2019, used vehicles imported by non-licensed importers stood at 2,788 or 53 per cent as compared to 1,670 imported by dealers, or 32 per cent, [those are new vehicles]. Topping this list were imports from Japan”.

Madam Speaker, the trend here is obvious and, whilst these stats are a few years old, there is little doubt that the trend has not changed, therefore, not only do we have a traffic problem—as the Leader of Opposition noted—but we have a glut of used cars being imported. To a large extent, it is an issue that several of the recommendations being considered seek to resolve and, Madam Speaker, because I heard several misguided comments from across the aisle, I’ll examine these recommendations a bit closer.

“Recommendation #1- Caymanians should be allowed a maximum of two vehicles per person, per year that may be imported into the Cayman Islands. Caymanians importing more than three or more vehicles per calendar year should be defined in one of two categories namely, re-seller or collector.

Re-seller – persons should be required to have a trade and business licence and other requirements similar or identical to the licensed car dealers (new cars or used) combined with other restrictions.

Collector – persons should be subject to annual registration fee, (\$50 to \$100), identified with a special edition ‘collectors plate’ for each new import. A special ‘collectors plate’ could be commissioned and owners charged between \$500-\$750 for the plate.”

Madam Speaker, this recommendation may be controversial, but most Caymanians purchasing a car for personal use will not likely have an issue with this. Caymanians who are operating an unlicensed car dealership may have an issue, but they can be regularised if they get a trade and business licence, along with fulfilling other requirements to operate legally. Those Caymanians who collect cars in this scenario are also covered.

Madam Speaker, **Recommendation #2 speaks to ownership restrictions for short term work permit holders (3-12 months). These persons would be restricted from importing or owning an automobile. Leasing, co-opping and carpooling are recommended alternatives.**

Madam Speaker, let me take the opportunity to read that over carefully, because I heard the Hon-

ourable Minister of Tourism say we were proposing to stop foreign people from driving:

Ownership restrictions are recommended for short-term work permit holders—that is 3-12 month work permits. These persons would be restricted from importing or owning an automobile. Leasing, co-opping and carpooling are recommended alternatives. They can, though, own a motorcycle or a moped under 125cc, as noted in the recommendation.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Or a bicycle. This is certainly potentially controversial and so would need public debate, however, there is a good argument that individuals here over short periods, should utilise the existing public transport system, lease a car or purchase a motorcycle, moped or bicycle. The case for this recommendation is made much stronger, Madam Speaker, if the committee's recommendation on improving public transport is implemented, and I will speak to that shortly.

Madam Speaker, Recommendation #3 speaks of long-term (twelve months or more) permit holders; they would be allowed to own vehicles, but would be required to purchase a vehicle from a local supplier. Again, potentially controversial, though many long term work permit holders already purchased cars from local dealers. As a Parliament, Madam Speaker, we have a duty to ensure that our local economy is supported—this will assist in that effort.

Madam Speaker, Recommendation #4 speaks to age restrictions on vehicle imports. The report recommends that persons would be allowed to import vehicles that are no older than ten years—Madam Speaker personally, I think that is too high—with a goal of further reducing this age to six years as public transportation improves. We are all aware of the problem with very old cars that can be obtained cheaply being imported, on the road for a few years, then left abandoned in our communities. These not only add to our traffic woes, but worsen an already serious refuse problem once they stop working.

Moreover, newer cars are more fuel efficient, less polluting and built to the latest safety standards so a ban on older vehicles, Madam Speaker, will bring other sustainable benefits such as lowering our carbon footprint so when we get that new road at East-West arterial, Minister, at least the cars will be energy efficient and lower carbon footprint.

[Desk thumping]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: In my view, this recommendation is a reasonable proposal but, again, it's coupled with improving our system of public transport, and as I said, I will get to that later.

Madam Speaker, Recommendation #5 would require that all used car imports come with an official inspection certificate to confirm the age and other details regarding the car; surely this is just a common-sense recommendation to ensure compliance with both our rules and safety standards are maintained.

Madam Speaker, Recommendation #6 covers employee flex time or employees working from home, which, again, I think most people now accept is increasingly becoming part of how we do business in this post-COVID, modern world.

Madam Speaker, Recommendation #7 recommends buses for private schools, including offering duty incentives for private schools to purchase their own bus or extending the existing yellow school bus service already provided to public schools. More children using a school bus, especially for private schools, will equate to fewer cars on the road in the mornings, and again later in the day, when school closes. The recommendation also suggests that staggering the school commencement times of both public and private schools could provide a reduction in traffic congestion. Consideration should therefore be given, Madam Speaker, to adjusting primary and secondary commencement and conclusion times.

Madam Speaker, I will say that during the development of this report, a committee was put together including the Ministry of Education, and I will recognise their willingness to look at opportunities. I think some solutions were found, including to open their gates a bit earlier—I believe it was Savannah Primary that were able to because the PTA had volunteers that would stay with the kids until they got there. That was useful, so we found some solutions out of that exercise at the time.

Madam Speaker as the Leader of the Opposition highlighted, Recommendation #8 is to allow the introduction of reversible lanes on some of our major multilane roads. This would allow traffic to travel in either direction depending on the time of the day, Madam Speaker, so that more capacity is available for traffic going in the dominant direction. As the Opposition Leader noted, Madam Speaker, this is worthy of consideration, but would require much work into it becoming a practical and safe solution.

Recommendation #9, Madam Speaker, addresses the need for improved public transport and options for an App-based dial-a-ride or park-and-ride.

Recommendation #10 encourages carpooling. It states, Madam Speaker, that 85 per cent of cars coming into George Town in the morning, have one or two people in them. As Minister, I rolled out various initiatives within the public service to encourage carpooling amongst civil servants.

In 2019, with the help of the Deputy Governor's Office, we introduced a car-free day aimed at the public, and in 2021, we had a car-free week. Madam Speaker, these events were promising. The numbers were very encouraging with some individuals riding

bicycles to work including myself, Madam Speaker. Working from home, taking a bus and car pooling, were also encouraged. The initiatives seem to have stopped, and I would encourage the Government to restart them. They led to bicycles being placed outside the Government Administration Building (GAB), Madam Speaker, as when we did it that day, and then for a week the following year, many of the staff at the GAB used the bicycles to go out to lunch, et cetera, or to move around town.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, I would encourage them to go further: As part of the overall package of measures to be introduced in response to the committee's recommendations, I would urge the Government to consider drawing up a transport and travel plan for the public service. Such a plan would encourage public servants to better manage their business travel and make sustainable transport choices for their trips to and from the work-place. It [also] has the potential to make a significant contribution to reducing emissions, while improving public sector productivity and promoting health and wellbeing, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader noted that the last two Progressive-led Governments invested significantly in enhancements to the roads and highway network. Much of the work that we started is continuing under the Government, and I give them kudos for not scrapping it.

Madam Speaker, perhaps most significantly, we brought forward the delivery of the East-West arterial road extension and associated local improvements, that will help ease the congestion problems coming in and out of George Town at peak hours. We also left in place plans to complete various roads to help move traffic more efficiently through George Town—these included work on the Shamrock Road, the King's connector road, [and] the Godfrey Nixon Way extension. Another important road that was started and [remains] incomplete, is the airport connector road that provides an alternative route from the airport to West Bay Road. Members will be aware, [through] the Parliamentary questions tabled by the Opposition for this Sitting, that we will keep pushing the Government to ensure those vital improvements are completed as quickly as possible.

Madam Speaker, I was happy to receive the Honourable Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure's report on the works of his Ministry. I noted the updates and look forward to the continued work. In particular, I think, on the airport connector road which, as I was speaking to the Minister during the break, the traffic modelling system shows us, will provide a tremendous amount of relief at that Butterfield roundabout which is becoming the sticking point once you get into town.

It backs up traffic to Shedden Road, Eastern Avenue, all the way as far down as the Cayman International School (CIS) roundabout on the Esterley Tibbetts [Highway], and certainly, all the way down to the

bottom of Sparky Drive on North Sound Road—and if you happen to land at the airport anywhere after 4:30, you may as well find yourself a comfortable spot to sit for an hour or two, because you will not get out of North Sound Road. It is something we need to be concerned about for our guests arriving in the evenings.

Madam Speaker, my good friend—my cousin, the Honourable Minister of Tourism—spoke about all of the work that the Honourable Minister of Roads does for us and why we don't talk about it, so I will. I will read from the report. Here are the roads that the Honourable Minister completed in the districts in the first eighteen months, Madam Speaker:

West Bay South

- Captain Charlie Road;
- McDoom Lane;
- Peace Lane;
- Marsh Road;
- Ernest Jackson Dr;
- Willie Curran Road;
- Eli Bush Street;
- Chestnut Dr;
- Violet Lane; [and]
- Mary Mollie Hydes Road.

West Bay North:

- Sonny Powery's Dr;
- Lenders Close; and
- Turtle Crescent.

West Bay Central:

- Captain Joe Osbert Road;
- Leona Lane—he only did 250 ft. there, Madam Speaker;
- Heather Lane;
- Vibe Lane;
- Crescent Close;
- Fourth Avenue;
- Sky Way;
- Third Avenue; and
- Watercourse Road—a partial widening.

In Newlands:

- Moonbeam Drive; and
- Arlene Avenue (just two, there)

In Prospect:

- Dogwood Street; and
- Evco Tours Road, (just two, there).

Bodden Town East:

- Nashe Street
- Wild Street
- Belford Dr
- Cherry Tree Drive

- Bodden Town Mission House access road.

In East end, Madam Speaker there are:

- Tangelo Lane;
- North Street;
- Sierra;
- Little Bluff Road—yeah, [in] East you got a few more than two;
- Proud (by the East End United Church);
- Welcome Way;
- Fiddlers Way; and
- Sterling Lane.

North Side, Madam Speaker:

- Further Road;
- Union Street;
- Eagle Street;
- Grant Street;
- Constantine Street;
- North Side Playfield;
- Clifton Hunter bus lay-by; and
- Briardale Road.

Madam Speaker, there are 28 more months to go so, to answer my honourable friend and Honourable Minister of Tourism, I am confident that at some point my friend, the Minister of Roads will get to George Town East; George Town South; and George Town West. He may get to Red Bay and one day I pray—I pray—to see those pavers in George Town North.

Hence, Madam Speaker, I am so happy the Minister of Tourism pointed that out to us in his debate.

[Cross talk]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I could do the numbers, but the two that I remember...

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I remember several. Okay: George Town East, zero; George Town South, zero; George Town West, zero; Red Bay, zero; George Town North, zero, Newlands, two and Prospect two. I remember those.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, increasing the capacity of the road network was only a partial answer to the problems we face on Grand Cayman.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: As I have said many times, we cannot build ourselves out of this problem without these and other measures. The work of the committee on vehicle imports and transportation gives some important pointers into the other kinds of actions that will be required, Madam Speaker, if we are to deliver a comprehensive and long-lasting solution to Cayman's traffic woes.

During the debate on the Government's Strategic Policy Statement (SPS), Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was highly critical of the Minister's decision to cancel the free George Town shuttle. As he pointed out, as well as providing a valuable service, the shuttle helped promote the switch to public transport, and cancelling it sent all the wrong messages about the PACT's commitment to an effective public transport system—another PACT mishap.

The Progressives' commitment to deliver such a system—

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Member are you rising on a point of order?

Point of Elucidation

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Rather, Madam Speaker, on a point of elucidation.

I am just asking the Member: Is he saying that I, as Minister for Transport, cancelled his bus route? Did I understand him to say that?

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I did not say which Minister, Madam Speaker, so I apologise. It was being done through the George Town revitalisation initiative, which was under the Minister of Planning, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure (PAHI).

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, the commitment of the Progressives to deliver such a system is not in doubt. The Leader concluded the section of his SPS remarks by saying, **"I urge the Government to bring forward plans for a future public transport solution for these Islands at the earliest opportunity."**

Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader continued and advised the Government, that **"the work was already started under the Member for George Town North when he was Minister. He previously told this House that he had asked his Ministry to proceed with procuring expertise in the public transport to recommend the best options for us to consider. Indeed, Madam Speaker, our 2020/2021 SPS noted that 'Government will commission a**

specialist mass-transportation study to analyse the options available for us to achieve the necessary step change in public transport that the country needs.'

Like many things, these plans were hampered by COVID, but the Ministry was preparing to come forward following the election, so I urge the Government to ignore where the plans came from, but instead let us just move forward; let us see what are our best long-term options, rather than trying some Band-Aid approach."

In short, Madam Speaker, everything was in place for the incoming government to take rapid strides forward in developing a new public transport system for Cayman. It is disappointing that it has taken the Minister of Transport eighteen months to get the necessary contract in place for a consultancy study. He fervently defended that saying all sorts of things—but he did have enough time to go to Barbados [to] try to buy some buses; so, I think that at least is where some of the eighteen months have gone.

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Tourism.

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Can the Minister clarify, when I went to Barbados to purchase buses?

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, it was widely, widely, publicised across the island that the Minister visited Barbados, visited the public transport system there, spoke to the idea of doing a joint purchase of buses and copying the Barbados plan. It was widely publicised, Madam Speaker.

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Madam Speaker, can the honourable Member provide the publications on which he said that I was there to purchase vehicles? I ask him to make them available to this honourable House as per the Standing Orders.

[Crosstalk]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I will answer him in writing, but, just to clarify then: the Honourable Minister attended a conference in Barbados; he took along with him a staff from the public transport unit to attend the said conference.

Whilst he was in Barbados, according to his press releases and the newspaper reports, he met with the Barbados' Public Transport Authority or the equivalent thereof and discussions were held as to copying their system and to making a joint purchase to get the buses at a better price.

Hon Kenneth V Bryan: Madam Speaker, I really do not want to belabour this point, but as per the Standing Orders, unless he cannot provide those to me, he has to withdraw the comment because it is not factual.

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I am not reading from anything.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I am not reading from anything.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I am not reading from anything, Madam Speaker. It was widely, widely, publicised Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, The Strategic Policy Statement makes several references to PACT's intention to improve public transport. That document recognises both the social and economic benefits that will flow from getting a modern and efficient public transport system in place on Grand Cayman; yet, Madam Speaker, nearly eighteen months after the SPS, it is only now that the Minister has taken action. I hope this doesn't continue into another PACT mishap, and hopefully, the report he has now commissioned from his selected consultants will deliver and Madam Speaker, I will recognise that we were contacted—certainly, I was contacted by the consultants for a meeting. Unfortunately, I was off island and we have rescheduled that meeting.

Madam Speaker, I say hopefully, because the Minister's statements on radio talk shows and elsewhere, still leave me with the nagging doubt that he thinks a consultancy study is there just to rubber-stamp a solution of his own making. It seems, Madam Speaker, the only thing he is interested in, is whether Cayman needs a government-run bus service, privately-run buses or a mix of the two. Madam Speaker, this is putting questions about the form of a solution before you have an answered question about its function.

In my view, Madam Speaker, the study needs to look properly at all the potential public transport solutions. Madam Speaker, those could include but not [be] limited to buses; or potential solutions might include anything from tramps to water ferries to electric scooters. Just during the lunch break we had a robust conversation across the aisle, about all of these ideas.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, the study needs to look at what is viable and feasible for Cayman, and the con-

sultants need to be free to recommend whatever solution—or mix of solutions, best meets Grand Cayman's future needs, and not some other country's plans or needs. The plans, the recommendations, need to suit and meet Grand Cayman's future needs, Madam Speaker.

I hope the Minister will reassure me at some point that the current review will include a full option appraisal; I hope he will publish the terms of reference that the consultants are now working on, so that we can all be clear on the intentions behind the study, and I hope, Madam Speaker, he will commit now to publishing the full report once it is available.

I beat him up enough already.

[Laughter]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I cannot do it.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, as the SPS suggests, and I would argue, there are clear economic and social benefits from improving our public transport system—why was there not a clear investment plan as part of the 2020-23 budget?

Even allowing for some delay after the elections, Madam Speaker, if the study had been commissioned and completed, by now, we would have expected the first phases of investments next year, but this Government made no provisions for any such investments, as the Minister said in his debate that he will be looking for the money in the next budget phase. I am worried, Madam Speaker. I am concerned it may be too late.

Madam Speaker, next budget cycle there will be no excuse. The consultants will have reported and the way forward on public transport should be clear, and this is an issue that requires action. Next budget cycle the country needs to see real investment and a viable solution, not just warm words in an SPS document. Hence, Madam Speaker, I will hold the Minister to his word that he will be bringing a solution next year and, if I believe in the solution, he will have my support for the financing.

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjection]

Mr Joseph X Hew, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Madam Speaker, I do agree with the Opposition Leader that traffic is a complex problem and there is no single silver bullet solution that will resolve the problem. Madam Speaker by utilising these recommendations (3, 6 or 10—it doesn't matter to me), the Government will be able to put their minds to developing the kind of innovative solutions that our country needs. I do hope, Madam Speaker, that the Govern-

ment will accept the motion and do the necessary work, so that by their midterm in March of 2023, they will report back with a comprehensive set of proposals to tackle the traffic congestion.

I think I am going to leave it at that, Madam Speaker and again, as the Honourable Minister of Tourism said, (he said a few other things), this should not be considered a political football. It affects all of us, no matter where you live in Cayman now because, even from West Bay, the traffic is backing up; so I encourage the Government and perhaps, perhaps, the Civil Service used the recommendations and the research they had done for this report, to compile the report to them, as it is the Government's will, to do so.

Again, I encourage the Government, those on the other side, to take the time [and] have a look through the report. If you thumb through it—I assume you will have a presentation to your Caucus on any findings that may come out of the studies—you may see something in there that they may have overlooked, so I encourage them all to have a look at the report and consider the recommendations therein.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? If not, does the mover wish to exercise his—Oh, I am sorry. The Honourable Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Deputy Speaker – Parliamentary Secretary to Labour, Housing and Transport and Elected Member for Bodden Town East: I don't know who hit today.

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I thought I should get up and register my voice, as Bodden Town is suffering immensely. I hear both sides, Madam Speaker, and pray there is a solution in the horizon. I believe that this country expects a solid plan expeditiously.

What we need to do, in my and many of my constituents' opinion, is to start the road all the way to Lookout Gardens. There's nothing hard in making that decision; that is my public opinion for the people of Bodden Town. Yes, North Side and East End suffer the same traffic woes, and I keep saying it all the time: Bodden Town has the worst situation, and we need to act fast. This thing of waiting for this and that...

Yes, we missed the ball some years ago. We are where we are. We have a major problem, Madam Speaker. When you're driving from North Side, you can drive a couple of miles, turn out [of] your gate; when you're driving from East End, you can drive a couple of miles, turn out [of] your gate. When you are

driving from Bodden Town, you cannot turn out of the gate.

Madam Speaker, I want my people to know that I'm prodding as much as I can in trying to find a solution. There is no easy fix, and there's not one thing that will cure this. As suggested earlier, there are many things that we could try and I don't have to go into them. I've been talking about a tram system for years now; I've been talking about a holding point in Prospect, or Spotts, for years now. Madam Speaker, I think we just need to make a decision and move at it quickly.

One of my supporters who passed on had a saying in our meetings. When she [would] ask me if certain things were done she would say *nothing not going to get done, because they got this whole drag-foot policy*.

Madam Speaker, the eastern districts are punished daily; the children are tired, the parents are tired. People are getting up, some from 4.30 am, and some at 5 o'clock. I know, Madam Speaker, I have children also; some of them have insomnia. You talk about accidents, this is what happens when people are tired, so I hold no punches when it comes to finding a solution for my people; and yes, they are going to have this group and that group rallying while our people suffer daily. Madam Speaker, I just want to say to my people, *I feel your pain, I actually drive that road also, I am right in the centre of it and we must find a solution*.

We can do some temporary measures, everything doesn't have to be permanent, but if at least 400-cars-a-month are coming in, and Bodden Town or the eastern districts are the fastest growing districts—where do you think the cars are going? Madam Speaker, before I hit the wrong button, I am going to press this red one. I think my voice has been heard.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The Member for Red Bay.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I think both my Leader and Deputy Leader have very comprehensively addressed this issue so, Madam Speaker, I am not going to go into what's in the report that we are asking the Government to consider—that's all, [consider].

I don't think I have ever heard a Minister with responsibility for a subject stand up and say so little as did the Minister [with responsibility] for Roads some time ago. Even if he had just sat down and named out all the roads in North Side that he paved since he's been in office, he would have done something. He was so dismissive of the report, he wouldn't even stay in here to listen to what the former Minister,

who has a grasp on this subject that I hope the current Minister will gain someday, [had to say].

Madam Speaker, the road system alone, all of us agree, is not going to resolve the problem, but it will go a long way; yet, the first thing the Government did when they took office was to, essentially, down tools for all the road projects that were underway. The Minister on his instructions, I am told by my people who talked to me in the NRA, insisted that the paver be sent North to fix every road up there, and as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who spoke earlier said, every constituency except those which the Opposition represents, had roads fixed or improved.

You wonder why there is no apparent strategy to address the road system and the issues with it, because that's not what's on the Minister's mind; what's on his mind is trying to ensure re-election. Madam Speaker, I've been elected six times consecutively. When you're elected you are supposed to, as far as possible, to do the things that you promised the people you were going to do. You're supposed to carry out the job, not spend every moment and every cent trying to ensure that you get elected the next time. To do what, do the same thing all over again?

The Minister [with responsibility] for roads was presented with a great set of plans and projects that were underway which, had he moved so they could have been completed before this Government demits office, they would have put up a statue to him in Heroes Square, because he would have gone a long way to resolve the problems. However, when we take this parochial approach to what is a national issue, you get what we have now which is that nothing of consequence is happening, except the Linford Pierson extension, which was begun under the administration which I had the honour and privilege to lead.

The airport connector road should have been finished long time; the connection from Eastern Avenue to North Church Street should have been completed long time, but they downed tools. The people in NRA told us, *we don't have any direction to proceed*. They want to consider this and that, they want to re-think this and that. Eighteen months later, where is the plan? Then Madam Speaker, there is this approach by some on that side—I won't say all because some of them who are not happy with it have spoken to me. Some of them seem to believe, particularly the Premier, that you can *make an omelette without breaking eggs*.

Madam Speaker, more than 70 per cent of Grand Cayman is or was mangrove swamp. Now you tell me how we expect to continue to grow a country to develop without intruding on some of that. One of the great ironies, and I have to deal with this in my own constituency which, by the way, what now constitutes the constituencies of Prospect and Red Bay was almost 100 per cent swamp when I was a boy; very little dry land. Some of it was what my father used to say, *"the only reason is land, is because it's not sea,"* so

when daddy's good friend, Mr. Selkirk 'Sellie' Watler, God rest his soul, (Bob Watler's father), decided to develop what became known as Red Bay Estates, people thought he was a madman because it was all mangrove swamp.

Hence, how are we going to continue to develop this country without intruding on some of the central mangrove wetlands is beyond my ability to understand. One of the great ironies which I started to say, of people who live in the newer part of South Sound—because when I was a boy there was virtually nothing East of the cemetery in terms of homes—I wonder how many people realise that the whole of South Sound was dredged and that's why all those expensive homes can be built out there. One of what I, even as a child, considered one of the most precious natural possessions that we had called Tarpon Lake, was filled in to make way for that. (*I'm not calling no names; wasn't just him*).

[Inaudible interjection]

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: There, Red Bay, and Prospect is almost all reclaimed or dredged land. I don't know how many mangra, lagoon snappers, and the like we shot in South Sound in the big pipes they used, which were still left there after the dredging was over; loads of fish life were there. That's what I grew up doing. From Prospect Point, down to Pull-and-be-Damned-Point (South Sound), we used to go spear fishing.

That's how I grew up, Madam Speaker, but now that people have built homes and have these developments, they live there happily, they don't want anybody else to touch one mangrove root and anyone who speaks the way I do they say, *oh they don't care for the environment*. Don't care for the environment? My roots here go back, Madam Speaker, on my mother's side I don't know how far—she was a Bodden; on daddy's side, two hundred years. I care not only about now, but I care about the future, my children, and if one day I have grandchildren and all of those who inherit these beautiful Islands.

We have gone too far down the road to tell people, *you know what, we got too many of you all here now; unna need to go back*. The population is about 80,000...I remember saying some years ago and I was beaten over and over and over again—I still see it now and again—that the policy of the governments that I led was to push for a population of 100,000. That was not the case at all. That was my projection which is proving accurate given the trends, and we still have to prepare for that. Saying, *oh woe is me, what are we going to do about this?* Is not going to come close to fixing the problem.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and his team came up with what I—and I think most of us around the table in those early days, including the

honourable Kurt Tibbetts—though was the best approach to trying to address the developmental issues.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for Red Bay, I want to pause for a minute to call for the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) as we have now passed the hour of 4:30 pm.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: You want me to do it, Ma'am? Anybody can do it, but seriously...

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, I rise to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) in order to allow the business of the house to continue beyond the hour of 4:30 pm.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.
Please continue Honourable Member.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was starting to talk about what the then Minister, the now Deputy Leader of the Opposition, called *Plan Cayman*, as what most of us who had been around thought was the best concept we had seen, to address the lack of a current development plan for Grand Cayman. You see, Madam Speaker, Minister after Minister has tried—and failed—to get a proper development plan review completed during his or her term; yet it is mandated by the Development and Planning Law. However, the cycle takes so long and the issue is so contentious that virtually any Minister, whoever tried to do that lost his or her seat because no matter what you do—and this is not just true of Cayman, the developed world over—these things, people have very strong views, sometimes extreme views on either side of the development spectrum.

You see, people in poor countries, (such as Cayman was when all of it started) were so happy to see something happening, that everything was okay, but now that we reached a certain stage, everybody debates everything and most people [think], *if I have it, I don't want anybody else to have it; I built there, but I don't want anybody else to build there*. You hear it over and over again, so these things caused the development plan process to never get completed.

The concept of *Plan Cayman* was, we take it one area at a time, complete that and keep moving forward. The first was to be Seven Mile Beach (SMB) then of course along came COVID and that [SMB] became a victim like many other things that we wanted to get done during our tenure.

The new Government's first approach to it was, it was a terrible idea. The Premier *kicked it into touch*. He had to go back out there, get it and bring it back though, but eighteen months on, we still have nothing. Madam Speaker, you might be thinking, *but what does that have to do with the transportation issue which is before us*, it has everything to do with it, because they can ban the importation of cars as much as they want, but cars don't drive themselves—they are making some that can, but I don't see any here yet. Every car you see going down that road has at least one person in it, I can assure you that. In my view, banning or restricting the importation of cars is only going to create another set of problems because, when only certain people can bring in vehicles, the prices will go [up].

Madam Speaker, I know many expats, and I can tell you many of them, especially those who work in the service industry—restaurants, bars, massages and those kinds of services—would be delighted if they didn't have to invest in a car, because where most of them came from they couldn't drive, let alone have a car. They were used to getting on a bus or by some [other] means to get wherever they wanted to, so they buy these vehicles because they need them. Those who suggest that, *well we can ban that sector of our population saying, they can't get any cars*, how will the people get to work if you don't have a system in place that allows it.

You have to look at all of these considerations—and I understand the frustrations, Madam Speaker. I live in Prospect. The cars coming off the East West Arterial trying to get two cars ahead come down through Poindexter and on to Marina Drive, sometimes Mangrove or Mahogany as well, to try to get back out on the main road. What do you think that does to the people who live in the Prospect and Red Bay constituencies?

The Deputy Speaker mentioned just now about getting out of your driveway. I have constituents who complain they can't get out of the driveway not because of traffic generated by where they live, but the traffic coming down off the East West Arterial. For the poor people who live in Red Bay Estates, it's almost a suicide mission every morning, to try to get out of there because they have to come out and go East to be able to turn on to... I don't think that road got named—the road that leads to the roundabout there across from Red Bay Primary School or goes all the way up around the Thompson roundabout.

We all see and feel it, and everybody who lives here is frustrated by it, not just the Caymanians. The Caymanians curse the foreigners, but we cannot live without the foreigners and anybody who suggests that it will be the same Cayman got another thing coming.

Madam Speaker, what I'm saying, by all these different things is... somebody used the word holistic. I don't know if he knew what it meant, but it does re-

quire a holistic approach to these issues and for the Minister [with responsibility] for roads to simply reject it out of hand without even considering, let alone speaking to the report, which is the subject of this Motion is really a sad indictment of the Government. It suggests to those who are listening that you [the Government] don't care, at least the Minister doesn't care, about anything that was there before he came. He must believe that somehow, when he took that oath of office, all of the knowledge relating to transportation issues was just zoomed into his head so he knows all the answers.

He doesn't have to consider anything that anybody else said or did before he came, so what he has to show to the country after eighteen months in office is that he knows how to hire Island Paving to pave roads which had already been built. Not built one road, not extended one road in eighteen months.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: He might have done some in your constituency that we don't know about. Perhaps when you get up, Mr. Bush, you will explain all that to us.

Madam Speaker, seriously, and I am saying this principally to my long-time friend, the Honourable Premier—I sat beside him in law school for five years. That's how long we know, really know, each other, that he needs to get past the idea that building the East-West arterial is a bad thing. We have to find a way to do it with the least-adverse environmental—

Point of Order

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier, what is your point of order.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, I am very open to discussion, I let people pass by on issues, but Madam Speaker, the Member for Red Bay cannot stand over there and make assertions he can't prove. He is misleading the House in suggesting that I am against the East West-Arterial.

I have issued a public statement, Madam Speaker, confirming that I am in support of getting the road done, but getting it done properly by getting the EIA [Environmental Impact Assessment] done. Madam Speaker, I'm going to speak about this later because three times now, three times in his contributions and while sitting over there, he has made these statements. Madam Speaker, he is misrepresenting my position. I have supported my colleagues in getting the EIA done to get this road done; that's where he has failed.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am not sure that was a Point of Order but that's fine, I like the explanation. I think the country, and even his colleagues on the other side, will be relieved to know that the Premier is supporting the continuation of the East West Arterial because that's not what we are hearing everywhere we go.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Again, it is a continuation of the same line. This is pure politics, an attempt to mislead this House and, in particular, to mislead my colleagues over here.

I support the East-West Arterial but I support it being done properly. I have been pushing to get the proper process done, unlike what the previous administration failed to do over the last eight years. I'll come to that, but I do not appreciate an attempt to mislead the public or mislead the Members of this House Madam Speaker, thank you.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Honourable Premier was a minister in one of those governments. He knows very well the efforts we made to get the EIA. In fact, it wasn't until almost the last year that the issue about the EIA was even raised by DOE [Department of Environment] but if he believes that most of the people of this country are really focused on an EIA while they are sitting in their cars for hours trying to get to town from North Side, East End, Bodden Town, Prospect and Red Bay, then he really has the wrong end of that stick. I don't hear one soul talking about an EIA in my constituency. What they say to me is, *Mr. Alden, what are you going to do about this thing?*

Madam Speaker, we really need to get a development plan in place. We need to think carefully about how we want to see Cayman continue to develop. Certainly, Madam Speaker, I am not one of those who subscribe to this [idea] that we want in the eastern districts, the same thing we got down in George Town and if you talk to the people of the Eastern districts until you didn't want that either, so the idea of carrying loads of businesses up there is not one I support.

Part of the magic of these Islands is that you can get so many different kinds of experiences in such a small geographical area. As far as I am concerned, years and years ago we ceded Seven Mile Beach to the tourists. We see that Caymanians sold their land. I hear people [saying], "this Government did this and this". It was not Government that sold the land. It was Caymanians looking to improve their lot in life, and

who could blame them? Many mistakes have been made looking back now fifty, sixty, years later; but very few on that side are old enough to understand how poor Cayman was in the 70s. Especially those of us who come from the windward: East End, the poorest district in the Cayman Islands—by a long shot. I remember when East End got electricity, and I'm only 61. I was a big boy.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Thus, Madam Speaker let's not, I hope, go down the road of saying we going to do to Rum Point and Cayman Kai what we have done to Seven Mile Beach, because those are the extremes of the island.

People who want a nice slower, quieter, vacation or lifestyle can still go windward and find it. Those who want a much more Miami Beach-like experience go Seven Mile Beach. If you want even quieter you can go Cayman Brac, and if you really want to get away from it all, you can quit the world and go to Little Cayman. That is part of the magic of these Islands, so I hope that part of this idea about how we are going to manage transportation issues really isn't seriously focused on evening-out the population, commercial activity, hotels and so forth, by sending more of them windward.

Madam Speaker, there is a Motion coming so I won't dwell on that, but this whole issue about erosion of the beaches, particularly on the northern and western ends of the island, some of it to the South too, is largely the result of the construction of walls and other structures too close to the water. If we want to address that issue, we are going to have to make some other concessions. If we want to stop building so many buildings, we are going to have to go higher and encourage investors. The trade-off for the height is the setback. I won't live long enough to see the benefit of most of that even if I live as old as grandfather was; these things take time.

We have seen, over the last ten years, the redevelopment of most of the earlier condominium projects which were along Seven Mile Beach because the land became so valuable that it was viable for them to demolish those structures and build taller ones and still make lots more money. Those are the kinds of discussions and decisions that need to be taken about the overall continued development of these Islands, and what sort of population targets we are looking for, and what infrastructure we are going to be able to put in place to accommodate it; but I think anyone who believes that you can simply turn off the top and freeze things and all will be well, is gravely mistaken.

As a country, I believe firmly that the day we stop growing, is the day that we start dying. We have got to evolve with the time, we have got to create and provide the amenities that the modern world wants.

Otherwise, our own people are going to go elsewhere to seek them, because the expectation levels of people who live in Cayman, not just Caymanians, but people who live in Cayman for any length of time, are incredibly high.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: No, it's the other way around.

[Laughter]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: They don't want you over there anyhow, so you might as well come.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Madam Speaker, I would urge the Government not to be led into their approach on this by the approach taken by the Minister for roads. Don't just kick this report and these recommendations into touch. All the Motion is asking is that the Government considers them.

However, we also urge, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has said, *to let's get on with it*. Eighteen months is enough time dithering; let's do something. Before they blink, this term will be over, and on its present trajectory little or nothing will have been achieved as far as improving the transportation and traffic situation in Cayman.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The honourable Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I heard it was hoped that when the Motions didn't run as they would normally run, which is by numerical order, we would take the shorter ones first, but it doesn't seem so, because when I look at this Motion, it says, *"resolve that the government consider, as a matter of urgency, reviewing the recommendations in the report and publishing a response to the recommendations setting out which recommendations will be implemented."* Yet, when the mover got up he went from one end of the world to the next. It didn't centre around that discussion at all and, in spite of me agreeing with much of what my friend, the Member from Red Bay said, I think he is being a little unfair to the Minister.

In defence of the Minister, he took the position that he is doing something substantial in getting the road system in a position where our people are not hurting from the position we are in, in regards to the national transportation problem we face, or in vehicles (which makes the transportation, I guess). I can't agree with him that the Minister didn't do the right

thing and that he is not doing anything, because if anything can be said of this Minister, it [is] that this Minister has been doing things and yes, there are the big things and the big thing is a whole transport system, which is split, I think, between two Ministers. The next big issue for those who live in the East, is the East-West corridor. This discussion went from criticism on district roads to a Barbados trip.

Madam Speaker, we all know that there are too many vehicles in this country, and no matter how many roads we build, it's going to be that problem too because there are no limitations. You travel this road and you see three people from one house in three different cars; and if you go to their house, you find a truck too. Now, we don't want to limit what people need, the pleasures they have, and their independence, because that is a big thing: *I want to get in my car and go; I cannot wait on daddy, I can't wait on mama. I got to do my own thing.*

People's independent feeling, and we know that because most of us have adult children. We know, and if we say we don't know, then we are not telling the truth. We know how them younger people feel. They are independent, they want to get going—but we have to take positions that we know because we are older, and while they may say we “fool-fool”, we know the impacts, and what is happening, and we know that while they want something done, if we do all that they expect, no matter what we do, it nah goin' satisfy. We nah goin' get the problem fixed.

We all know there are too many vehicles in this country; and this thing about the report, let me just say when I read it—because I must admit this is the first time I have seen that report, I don't think that report was Tabled in the House, I don't think so.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: No, it wasn't Tabled. I think I would have remembered that. Many of these issues have been bandied about for a long time, because I know that my Government, and various ones, took on the problem. We suggested a limitation on vehicles and put in a bus system and were nearly eaten, for it.

Because we were dealing with a piece, I offered—because this thing of our traffic and vehicles and transport can't just be dealt with one piece of road or just dealing with taxis; but if you deal with each piece, at least it is going to eliminate some of the problems we face. I even offered to buy vehicles and give the taxis so that they would be a regime that is well-known, rather than everybody doing their own thing. That I would buy the buses and let them be invested by the Caymanians. Oh, yeah, I was nearly eaten and don't ask the things that they said. You know how good they can do that.

The East-West corridor, Madam Speaker, is not new! At the same time I was doing the West Bay

bypass, I suggested that we do the East-West corridor and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Nope, didn't want that either. Dart was goin' get it! Well, I wish he had got it. We would have had it; and that's one of the problems—“likey, likey”. Don't like this one; this one goin' get something out of it; oh, yeah, him? Can't do that. Can't make him get it. Yeah...

One mistake: My wife is in Shetty's [Health City], and between Monday and Tuesday I made five or six trips there. I wish to God I had put it in West Bay.

[Laughter]

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: However, the one mistake I made when I said we go East with it: I didn't do the East-West corridor, because I don't care about lime lizards and anything else. Human life first, that's my position.

We have to plan, of course, and I don't think the Member for Red Bay's position is much different from what I heard the Premier say, about what he wants done. He wants to do it through these different, scientific ways, I guess, for better words, but we can't sit down all the time and wait for those things. We can't, because this Government doesn't have the time to do it. It will be forever, and yes, there are many factors, many issues to our traffic problems, and at this junction in our development stage, they can't be cured in one sit-down. Not goin' happen. It is not going to happen; there are just too many facets to it.

Try to deal with the North Sound, and I will talk about that later on. You want to see the different things it impacted there. Same thing. If they want to say we failed, let them accuse us. The fact is we tried and there are many factors that control, not just in this House, it seems like, why certain governments can't get things done. Many other factors stopped me from getting things done, and so, honourable Members, I am not agreeing that our Minister is so far behind. No; I am not going to say so because I know the work he has put in.

He has bucked up on the same problems the last administration had. Same people... Bureaucracy! When I was preaching it, they put it on a video and put an afro on my head. See this 'ya? That's how they made fun of me. The bureaucracy in this country is killing the country, and will continue to do so! When the Prime Minister in England told me he had cut out a thousand pages of planning regulations for them I said, “Yeah; but you all want to complain because I want to raise the heights of the buildings?” “No, no, no, we are not complaining, it's gotta be done right.” I say, “Yeah; done right, all right. Don't get nothin' done. Stall to death.” Same lime lizards.

One thousand pages, but look at the bureaucracy we have to go through in this country. That's a *huge* problem so, to be fair to our Minister, I think he has done very well with the systems that are in place and I think you all on the other side know what I am saying, because I know that you went through some of it. Yeah, you all went through some of it. I also know that you told the Governor [that] you weren't doing certain things, and you went about your business.

That's one of the things that the administration has to deal with. Thank God I am in no executive position and never will be in this country again. Not trying to get into it; not going to be pushed, begged, or otherwise into it. The problem in the country has been politics. Don't want him to get credit for it—"Oh no, no, cannot do that. It will make him too popular."

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *"That gotta get investigated anyhow, that will slow him down."* I hope, I hope, that we are past that. I hope that we can understand where we stand, as Caymanians. That we are a minority. It's a minority because we know we need other people in the country, but we know that we are a minority and we should be looking out for each other.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: However, it seems the urgency is still there to destroy, to kill.

No, I can't agree with this idea that our Minister is at fault and, while I'm aggravated about things as I see [them], because I know what I have tried to do in forty years, eight years there, eight years out there and so many here, and still over here. I know what we have tried, what different Ministers in the Government have tried. Ministers that I have been against, but I know the things they tried to do; so, I hope we can get past the idea that to get into power, they got to kill. I heard the Member from Red Bay say that, right over there. That it was one of the problems. I am repeating what he said at the time.

I am hoping that with what the Minister is doing, and I think there are two Ministers working on it, we will deal and come to grips with some of the issues—because I don't think we can get it all done, but I am not going to say that this administration is not moving in any right directions either, no. I don't like slowness, I don't like bureaucracy, and I am a man for development because the Member from Red Bay knows that what he said has [been] my position over the years: if we don't grasp wealth, we reap poverty.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? The Member for East End.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to give a short contribution to Motion No. 7 of 2022-23, moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, every Member that has spoken so far has acknowledged that traffic is a major problem, especially for us in the eastern districts. Not a day passes, that I don't have representation from my own constituents on this very, very, vexing issue, Madam Speaker and quite frankly, it's one of the issues that keep me awake at night.

Just recently, I needed to speak on a matter to a constituent very early in the morning and he told me he was on the way to town. I heard a little child in the background, and he said it was his daughter, this was at about twenty minutes to six in the morning. He said he was in Bodden Town; that he has to leave home so early because of the traffic that he puts his children to sleep in the back seat of the vehicle until he gets to town and then he provides them breakfast before he takes them to school near 8 o'clock.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine: That is no quality of life for our people in the Eastern districts, Madam Speaker. None, whatsoever.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine: Madam Speaker, I must mention, too, that like the Minister for Planning, I have had to endure the same horrors that the good people of East End and the other Eastern districts have had to endure. Quite recently I left home at about quarter to six to come to a meeting for 7:30 in George Town, and because of a minor fender bender I never arrived at that meeting until twenty minutes past eight. Again, this is no quality of life for our people in the eastern districts.

Madam Speaker, our people in East End, North Side, Bodden Town East are affected the most. We spend longer time in traffic, can hardly get out of the driveways like my good colleague said; we burn more gas sitting in traffic, so it affects us not only in time, but in our pockets. We can't take a piecemeal approach to this situation.

Madam Speaker, I know the Government, and the Minister for roads, as my colleague for West Bay West alluded to, are working hard. Like the Member for West Bay also said, he is working hard with his colleague, the Minister of Tourism, to develop a holistic solution to this. We know the East-West Arterial is not going to be a silver bullet, we know that. We know it's going to take other measures to implement, to tackle this traffic problem, but I also want to let people know, publicly, that I support the East-West arterial as well.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine: Madam Speaker, I know that the required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is in progress and well on the way, but I, too, would like to see it get done as quick as possible because we need this road so that we can get some relief to our people.

All my colleagues have mentioned how difficult this is for every one of us. I am not even sure what to really say [about] the public transportation system that we currently have, or what we call it. We have so many people in the eastern districts who rely on it and yet, when they get to [the] Frank Sound junction the [drivers] turn around there. They let our people off there, and insist that they are not completing the route. The only time they complete the route, is when the Transport Officer is sitting at the Frank Sound dock.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Isaac D. Rankine, Elected Member for East End: Every time I pass and I see them doing something like that, I report them to the Transport Unit. I've had reports that many of the bus drivers sit in one of the roads near the Clifton Hunter High School, and wait till an appropriate time before they come back out. They don't complete the route. It is very troubling Madam Speaker, that our people in East End are relying on this method of transport to get to town and its non-existent at best.

Madam Speaker, again, I said I would make a short contribution because I knew that everyone else had. The contribution they made was pretty much touching, rehashing and repeating most of what has already been done. I must reiterate that this Government is already looking and developing solid solutions for this problem which has grown over the years and was typically ignored, but we can no longer ignore it, Madam Speaker. We must, we must, take action now.

I can only say that I feel my people's pain, as my colleague for Bodden Town East said. I feel their pain because I too—I, too—have to sit in that traffic, but I support the Minister and the Ministers in their efforts to find these solutions. Hopefully, the Members of the Opposition will join in helping us provide these solutions as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

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

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

Madam Speaker, this could be considered an afternoon of contradictions when it comes to many of the statements from the opposite side.

Madam Speaker, in response to the comments attacking the Minister and his response to this Motion, let me say that those comments are not a true reflection of his response. His response was that the recommendations set out in this pretty little report we have been provided with, are things the Government has spent time knocking our heads together to come up with as well. Very similar things so, effectively, what he was saying, I think, was that we are going to be doing many of the same things.

Madam Speaker, every time I stand here, I try to deliver and debate in a very calm and controlled manner. I try not to get exercised—and I want to apologise; I know people will say this is a Westminster system, it's adversarial, but I prefer the representatives of this country to try to work together and make their points clearly. Most people do, Madam Speaker. Most people don't try to misrepresent things, but I will get back to that. What I want, is to apologise for not sounding very calm earlier. My colleagues know that I am someone who demonstrates much patience and occasionally, when I do not have sufficient patience, I typically apologise for that as well.

Madam Speaker, the Motion that has been brought is for the Government to consider this report. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that I have not seen this report before and I ask the Leader of the Opposition, why wait until now to Table it. You did not have to do that. You could have sent it to us and say, "hey, you know, we've done much work on this [and] there are some interesting proposals here.". I have not actually seen this report before, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: That may be so but, you know, when you come into office—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: No, no everything is empty. The most you find is dust.

Madam Speaker, I don't think this is bad work, I actually think it is good work; it represents good effort by former Member Harris.

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: And the same officers who were in the Ministry are still there.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yeah, but my point is: If you thought it was good today, why did you not send it to us before?

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: Because we left it there!

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Oh, you left it. You left it on a desk. That's not the way it works, you know that, Mr. Former Premier. You know it doesn't work that way. My point is, if it is a good idea today, it was a good idea before. You obviously knew that traffic was going to be an issue.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I'm not clarifying; I don't need any clarification.

Madam Speaker, they can say all they want. My point is, if it was such a good idea, why didn't they just send it and say, "hey, this is there; think about it."

Madam Speaker, you know some numbers were given about the cars that have been imported over the last four or five years, staggering numbers. Madam Speaker in 2019, 5,298 cars were imported. In 2020, 3,881 cars were imported [UNVERIFIED]. The average length of a car is probably almost 15 ft., so if you stack them end to end, in those two years, (2019 and 2020), twenty-six miles of cars were imported into this country. If you go back before that, you'll understand why we have a problem.

Yes, we have a traffic problem, all of us know it. We had a traffic problem before and we have a traffic problem now. It seems that I have to make a comment or apologise for certain things before the Opposition reacts. I saw the first substantive point they made in this House was to make a Motion on the adjournment, Madam Speaker. After I pointed out that the country was facing significant inflationary issues and forces, before I could even bring the statement, they jumped up with a Motion on the adjournment so that's good, Madam Speaker, because now I know, when I want to hear from them, how to get them to respond.

Now we have this situation with Pirates' Week and as Premier yes, I accepted responsibility, because that's what I should do and I have to tell the country that we're going to—and we are—doing something about it. However, there were some interesting circumstances around that which included that about sixteen accidents occurred that day around all the connector roads around George Town which began the chain reaction; and of course, the roads that we closed for the organisers of the Pirates' Week Committee.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: How many accidents you said we had that day around George Town?

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton:

I think it was sixteen. Sixteen different accidents on different connector roads.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, we ended up with a situation which was not fair to the people of this country so, yeah, I accepted responsibility. I guess that's why we now have this brought along when, if it was deemed by them to be fantastic, they could have just sent it a long time ago.

This discussion about eighteen months and *dithering*... You know what we were "dithering" with for eighteen months? We were dithering with the bigger challenge of reopening an economy that had been locked down, that was in a bubble, that was COVID naïve. We had the challenges of trying to reopen with all of our people's fears; trying to keep those under control. Trying to do it in an orderly fashion while trying to push vaccine penetration across the country. Whatever people's views were in relation to that, we were more successful in relation to that than anybody over on that side thought we were going to be. That is the kind of thing we were doing. *Talking about dithering?* That was the hardest part of dealing with COVID; locking down was the easy part.

What I am saying, Madam Speaker, is that this report is [from] June 2020. They had more than nine months that they could have implemented this. Nine months, Madam Speaker, at a time when there was...

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Nothing else to distract you because you were in a completely isolated, closed-borders position. Very little other distractions, so why didn't they bring or implement this? I guess when the chap that was doing it was trying to get the former Premier's attention on it, he couldn't get it done. I think this reflects a good effort but, as has been said, the traffic situation is not going to go away just by limiting the importation of cars, though it is clearly a part of the solution.

While they didn't have any time to do this, Madam Speaker, they certainly found ways to spend \$11 million paving roads in the run up to the election.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Stop, say that again.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: I didn't hear that.

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, I don't know, I have heard, my friends—and I want to tell you that I regard them as my friends.

I heard the Member for George Town North list roads, and I heard his complaints that some roads in constituencies represented by the Members on the other side, were not done. What I don't know, Madam Speaker, is whether they had done all of those roads before that. I don't know. I do know this, Madam Speaker: In my constituency I had one significant road done, and a piece of road that was about 250 ft. which

was absolutely necessary, so it certainly doesn't represent an attempt to push anything in my constituency.

I think others—particularly those districts towards the eastern side—probably feel that they didn't get much attention back then, but without looking at the full details I don't know what the scenario is there, so I think the attempt to cast aspersions on the activities of the Minister is unfair. You've got to have more information than that to be able to justify those kinds of allegations.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I know what that means too; you should know.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yeah, but that's still not evidence, I don't know what roads were done.

Madam Speaker, we have this challenge, we are going to deal with it. In eighteen months, this Government has had to go through so much in terms of reopening this economy, getting economic growth going again, Madam Speaker. What's the latest GDP growth figure? 3.4%? That's not my favourite metric, but it is one people utilise to indicate whether the economy is moving. Yes, we have inflationary pressures—we have many issues around that; and we have issues with traffic, but we have been doing much. The Minister of Tourism has been busy exceeding 2019 numbers at this point so, Madam Speaker, I *reject* comments about the Government dithering and doing nothing. *I reject it.*

Madam Speaker, coming back to the East, the people of North Side, East End, Bodden Town East and West, Savannah, even my constituency in Newlands, Madam Speaker, are all our brothers and sisters. Yes, they are all suffering, you've heard every single Member of this House who represents those constituencies talk about the issues they have had; how they feel that matters relating to traffic issues that concern them, are not being addressed.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Red Bay caused me to stand and I apologise for my apparent anger at the time, but I do not appreciate an attempt to mislead anybody, anywhere in this country, on issues that I have already spoken on. I, and let me repeat it for them, I support the proper approach to dealing with the East-West Arterial extension because I understand. I know what it was like. Savannah and Newlands had to deal with the same problems before the roads going in were expanded, when we just had one lane and two lanes going each way. I had kids to take to school too, so I understand. I know what it's like.

That's why I support getting it done and getting it done properly, but that seems to be the problem, Madam Speaker. They want the country to believe, and want to try to project their view into the minds of some of my colleagues, that I don't support this. My colleagues know differently; they have heard me pushing the issue of getting the Environmental Impact Assessment done in order for the East-West extension to be properly completed because there is no other way to do it, Madam Speaker.

One problem we have had in this country is that we have been making decisions without proper planning or proper assessments, without forecast, without data, without understanding where we were going—and Madam Speaker, in the past we had the luxury of doing such because the margin for error was much greater. When we came into office, we were told the population was 65,000. Our response was *no, that cannot be, doesn't feel that way; doesn't look that way.* We came up with 71,000. There were snickers; *how do you come up with that?* We did a census, the census came out and said it was just over 71,000. Then, less than a year later, we did a labour force survey which told us the population had grown by another 7,000 or 8,000.

Madam Speaker, one of the problems we have had is that we continue to make decisions on an ad hoc basis without proper planning and thinking through everything and our margin for error is shrinking *every single day* and the impacts on our people are *growing* every single day because we are not doing the necessary planning.

Madam Speaker, these were my colleagues—well, four out of the five sitting on that side now were my colleagues from 2013 to 2017. The Honourable Member for Red Bay was the Premier and my leader and I supported him. He knows how much I supported him, he knows that I regard him as a friend, every one of them too; he knows what we have been through but he also knows my views about these things. He knows that I care about making sure that we are making the right decisions using the right analysis, bringing in the right scientific information to ensure that we are getting the right result.

Madam Speaker, getting an EIA done for a road that's about ten miles long and goes along the edge of the largest, contiguous mangrove forest in the Caribbean is not something that takes ten years and there's no commitment to doing any EIA for it over all those years? I think it was 2014 when I said to my colleagues, and the then Minister of Planning, National Roads Authority (NRA) et cetera, *you need to do an EIA; I know that is what the result will be.*

Madam Speaker, on 3rd March 2014, my then Premier and leader, the Honourable Member for Red Bay, held a press conference and stated that the (at the time) estimated “**\$40 million, 10-mile highway extension would be going through a rigorous environmental impact assessment before being giv-**

en the final go ahead.” That statement came from him. It's in the news; I remember. Madam Speaker, what happened since? Nothing happened until April 2016—a year and three months later.

I was the Minister of Financial Services, Commerce and Environment at the time. The Planning Ministry wrote to my department and said, *we don't want to do this EIA because it has never been done for roads before in Cayman*. Well, with all due respect, we have never done a ten-mile long road along a highly sensitive wetland area. We built a road through the back of Bodden Town called Anton Bodden Drive; of course, nothing was done for that and magically, areas between that road and the coast road in Bodden Town started flooding.

Yes, some of them had areas where they were wet before, temporarily, but places started flooding; furniture started floating out of people's houses in Gun Square. Is that just a coincidence? It may well be, Madam Speaker, because no proper assessment was done in relation to the Anton Bodden Drive. Not things like culverts, because we all know the drainage in that area comes from the South side of the island and goes towards the North. Those are some of the issues I mean.

It's broader than that, and people with expertise have said that an EIA is necessary. Are we the only country that does an EIA for this kind of thing, Madam Speaker? *No*, many countries do it. Jamaica does it; Belize does it, maybe Barbados too, Bermuda does it, I don't know if they have roads to build any more, but they do. Madam Speaker, there has been an abject failure in getting this done knowing that it needed to be done. In ten years they probably could have done almost ten EIAs; in eight years, they could have done 7.5 to 8. We don't know exactly how long this one is going to take, but the current thinking is that it will be finished within twelve months and then we'll be able to move on to completing that road.

That road is necessary to allow our friends, our brothers and sisters, our family, to move easily and quickly from the eastern districts; to provide an emergency access way if, God forbid, the island is hit and the coast road is heavily damaged. It doesn't have to be a hurricane, doesn't have to be anything other than a traffic accident. I've been stuck in it; I've had to turn around and go and sleep in Frank Sound because there was a big crash in Pease Bay and I couldn't get down. Thank God I had some place I could go to sleep so I understand these issues, and I understand when my colleagues say *we have to get this done for our people*, and I say yes, let's get the EIA done and get it moving.

Madam Speaker, I think it was 2016... Anyway, it doesn't matter. The point is the government did not do the EIA; the government that I was a part of didn't do it even though I asked and indicated that it needed to be done. The administration following that didn't get it done [either].

Madam Speaker, my friend the Member for Red Bay talks about our friendship and I guarantee him that that friendship is intact despite everything else. Despite the fact that *I have broken a couple of eggs* here this afternoon, because *I know how to make omelettes too*. I want him to know that I genuinely—and he knows. Who issued a statement lauding him and pointing out his public contribution to this country when he received his KCMG?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: No, I am not quietly letting you get away with the things you said. It's because you didn't do what you needed to do that the road has not been started yet. That's what the problem is.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Yeah, you will see it, you will see it. What you'll see is it being done properly.

Madam Speaker, a year and three months, two and a half years, a year and a half, all these big chunks of time lapsing, expiring, passing by before there's further interaction to discuss the EIA from the Ministry responsible during that administration. That is what you call dithering; that's what you call recognising that there is a problem, and ignoring the solution by trying to keep coming back with your fingers crossed, hoping that you don't have to do something that is only going to take twelve months to do, and you just have to commit to doing it and get it done.

Now, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I have been pushing. I have been writing, not only to people in the National Roads Authority (NRA), but even my own team, my own Ministry people. I say to them, “you know what, if we don't push and make sure this is getting done”—and I am not blaming the Minister, but if we don't push and make sure this gets done... If you don't go over, above and beyond your job, you know who is going to get the blame? It is not going to be anybody else but the typical target. It's going to be Department of Environment (DOE); it's going to be the National Conservation Council (NCC). Always the case.

Thus, Madam Speaker, for all them years they didn't get anything done, but now that EIA process is underway, it is making progress, it is moving forward, we will have answers; but you know what, Madam Speaker? The EIA doesn't tell you whether or not to do something. It tells you how best to mitigate the impact, how to ensure that you do it, [in a way] that doesn't end up in long-term consequences that cost more money to address, or that you may not be able to address it all—people just have to suck it up and live with it. That's what an EIA does, Madam Speaker, and that's what we are going to get finished.

[For] eight years, there was a recognition of this issue from that side, and in a year and a half, we are going to be finishing that EIA, because it's well under way, and much further on than that side ever accomplished, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I talked about the consequences and the long-term impacts. I started off saying this was an afternoon of contradictions; let me start with some apparent ones: This afternoon and other times in this honourable House, I have heard the Deputy Leader get up and laud the Minister, for following his plan and tell him what a good job he has been doing building the roads that he had lined up, that he had started.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: I am not sure what it is, but the point is you laud him, you tell him he is doing a good job following your plan. Now you come back for political convenience and you are saying he is not doing anything. He is doing everything for everybody else. You got to make up your mind. The Member for Red Bay has to make up his mind. You can't just say he's doing "nothing".

[Crosstalk]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Madam Speaker, hear some of the challenges: The Member for Red Bay talks about where we have come from and the things we have had to face over the years and decades. Yes, he is right, he is right, that's where we have come from; but remember also what I pointed out earlier: our window, our margin of error, is fast shrinking and that's why we have all these challenges escalating and accumulating.

While there was a time when it was okay to fill this landing and to do this and that; when it was okay to go and shoot grunts out of a pipe—I hope you can shoot them somewhere [other than] out of a pipe, but...

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: Exactly. Like shooting fish in a barrel, I believe they call it.

Madam Speaker, that represents a perspective that is nostalgic. You know, "*Yeah, we used to do this.*". That's what happened with traffic. You know what happened with traffic during Pirates Week? Yes, we had these sixteen accidents, but they said to me, "*Sir, we closed the same roads we always closed for Pirates Week. The problem is, this is not the same Cayman!*"

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. G. Wayne Panton: It is not the same Cayman. It's thousands more, *miles* more cars, Madam Speaker. That's why there is a challenge that we have to work on together. There is a challenge that this Government is confronting and looking to solve through innovation, through proper planning, through making the difficult decisions.

We have other things on our agenda that we are trying to do which, again, they will say are a continuation of their efforts, but [when] a couple of people start hollering about this and that, they want it stopped then; they want it pulled back then. They would not have been pulling it back, Madam Speaker, because they know, they agree, there are things we have to do for this country. The Member for Red Bay pointed out we have all these people here that are not Caymanians, how are we going to know the difference between them unless we have proper ID? Anyway, that's another subject.

Madam Speaker, the point that I want to finalise our mind upon is this: We have got to follow proper planning. We have got to make decisions which represent the best long-term interest of the country. We can't look back and be nostalgic and talk about how we did something before and expect, just like with the traffic [during] Pirates Week, [that] if we do it again, we going to have a different result other than a worst problem—bigger chaos, more inconvenience, a lower quality of life for our people.

Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of challenges that we face and, while this report contains some good ideas, good suggestions, those suggestions and ideas are already reflected in the plans but obviously, a cross-Ministry approach is required. It's not just roads, we are not just building roads, because everybody acknowledges and recognises that this isn't about building roads and building ourselves out of a problem. We live on an island, we can't just build roads. We have to have the holistic solution that others have talked about and yes, we know what it means.

Madam Speaker, we have to plan properly in this country, we have to make the right decisions because we don't have any other choice. If we don't do it properly, we are going to majorly impact our people's quality of life and even the economy, because if people can't get around here, they can't get to their jobs, then that has a major impact—we lose productivity, we lose economic value, costs go up... We don't need any more of those.

Madam Speaker, the Minister for Tourism is pushing forward with the plan around public transport; that is a major part of the solution. Yes, we have to do all the things that the Member for George Town North referred to, in terms of encouraging people to carpool because I know. When I drive down in the mornings, I have two people in my car. I look across to see just how many people. Probably 80 per cent of cars have one person in them. Remember what I said? You line

up all these cars, you get miles of cars—one per every 15 feet.

We have to confront all of the issues, Madam Speaker. Some will include restrictions on importation; some will include making sure that people are car-pooling. A large part of it will require that we have good, reliable, low-or no emission, public transport in this country.

Madam Speaker, I think I have gotten what-ever vexed me out of my system now, so I thank you very much for the patience of this House in listening to my contribution.

The Speaker: Colleagues, I think this is probably a good time for us to suspend for the evening dinner break. We will resume at 7 o'clock.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay, we will change the return time to 6:30pm.

Proceedings suspended at 6:10pm

Proceedings resumed at 6:38pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed. We will pick up where we left off with Members speaking on the Motion. I call on the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

*I can see it in your eyes
That you despise the same old lies
You heard the night before.*

An Hon. Member: Me, too.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, that was one of the top songs of 1967 which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition quoted from in his opening speech. As it was something that was said back in 1967 before I was born, just out of morbid curiosity I went to see what the world was like in 1967. It was one of the top songs for that year.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: The line—I will repeat it for the Member for West Bay West—says:

*I can see it in your eyes
That you despise the same old lies
That you heard the night before.*

That top song, Madam Speaker, was done by Nancy Sinatra and Frank Sinatra and the name of the song, Madam Speaker, is *Somehin' Stupid*.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I really didn't plan on speaking on this Motion. The only reason I'm actually speaking on it, is that I was called out during the Honourable Leader of the Opposition's contribution with regards to something that I said and I couldn't help [it].

Madam Speaker, for those who probably would have missed it, I have the Hansards here and [he] said, during his contribution: "**Of course we have heard too, from the Minister of Finance, who has recently published the second quarter results. He spoke of the higher than expected revenues achieved, which included motor vehicle charges that were \$5.3 million greater than budgeted due to high volume of vehicle imports and so we see somewhat of a contradiction here, between what the Ministry is saying with regards to the continuing increases and of import duties.**". At that point, Madam Speaker, Members may recall that I interjected on a Point of Order to determine when and where that was said.

Madam Speaker. I went back and looked at what was actually gazetted by the Government for the Second Quarter, and I just want to make a note of the results that were gazetted—and again, this is in the public domain. For the period 1st January 2022 to the 30th January 2022, the total amount of money collected on motor vehicle duty was \$11,789,000 against a budget of \$12,692,000. In short, Madam Speaker, the Government revenues at the end of the second quarter were actually \$903,000 below budget and not, as it says there, \$5.3 million greater than budgeted due to the high volume of vehicle imports.

Madam Speaker, I accept there could have been a possibility that maybe it was the Third Quarter results that we were probably looking at, and anyone could easily have made a mistake because sometimes when you get up to speak here, I can tell people, many times I, too, get butterflies when I'm speaking.

Madam Speaker, this morning I went through a marathon session of Tabling many reports. Included in what I Tabled was the Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report for the period ending 30th of September and Madam Speaker, I can say to you, that for the period 1st of January 2022 to the 30th of September, 2022, the total amount collected on motor vehicle duty was \$16,526,000, and the budget at the time we did it, Madam Speaker, was \$19,037,000.

In short, Madam Speaker, at the end of the nine months of this Government's administration, the total amount that Government collected on vehicle revenue were more than \$2.5 million below what was

budgeted. Again I say, Madam Speaker, *it is not*. I went through; we looked at the press releases, we looked at what went out and again, I can't see where this \$5.3 million greater-than-budget number came from.

Madam Speaker, being as curious as I am, I even noticed an article in the *Cayman Compass* for December 7th, 2022, titled *Government Maintains Fiscal Surplus in Third Quarter* which says, under the heading that deals with revenues and savings: **“Coercive revenues recorded for the period was \$44.4 million ahead of budget, and \$23.9 million higher than during the same period in 2021.”** It goes on to say, Madam Speaker, **“A 14.9% increase in the population to 81,700 between the 2021 census and the third quarter of this year brought the government a \$7.6 million higher windfall in motor vehicle charges for the year to date as more cars were imported.”**

You see, Madam Speaker, it is this kind of reporting, this kind of stuff that goes out into the public domain, why it is important for us—for everyone in this House—to not depend on every single thing that we read sometimes. We go through and gazette this information, and it is very detailed. I do not understand, between a speech I gave yesterday morning at the Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants (CIIPA) Conference versus the third quarter results being back and forth, et cetera; but again, Madam Speaker, it is important that the public avails themselves of the resources that the Government has, of what we put in the public domain, so that they are not misled and don't have to go through...

Normally I probably would get somebody to write to the author and tell them that this is incorrect and all that stuff, but I think by now the people of the Cayman Islands are wise enough to understand what they read, and know when they can make sense of anything else.

Madam Speaker, I thoroughly enjoyed listening to my good friend for Red Bay's contribution; I have said it in this House before [and] I have said it publically that, having been first elected the one politician that I studied the most, watched the style the most, and in essence learned the most from to some extent about manoeuvring inside this honourable House, is the Member from Red Bay. As a student of political science, I can tell anyone: You can put the Member of Red Bay on a world stage and he would represent the Cayman Islands very well. You have to give Jack his jacket at the end of the day, and you cannot say that he has not attained certain political acumen having been elected, as he stated, six times continuously.

He is, by all means, a formidable politician and a formidable adversary, and I can tell you I enjoyed my time in Opposition when he was on the other side.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: No worry man, no. It coming; the payment coming.

Madam Speaker, the first political lesson I got was the Strategic Policy Statement after the 2017 election—ironically, the Member sits in the same seat I used to sit in. To the Government's credit, as the Premier stated then, it was his last term as Premier and he intended to be bold. He laid out his Government's plans for the next three years and I can say, Madam Speaker, that at the time my colleagues in Opposition, were inspired.

We got up, thanked him for his service and wished him all the best in terms of achieving what he set out to do because, at the end of the day Madam Speaker, despite whatever political differences there are, I can honestly say that I don't believe any Member of this honourable House, even those opposite, would want to see this or any Government fail. Yes, their job is to keep the Government in check; yes, their job is to make sure they hold us accountable, and that is part of the democratic process.

Having presented the Strategic Policy Statement—and we wished him all the best—he proceeded to put a political beating on all of us in the Opposition. His exact words at the end were something along the lines of, *“Our job is not to agree with the Government, our job is to oppose the Government, offer alternatives and if you want to agree with the Government, come sit on this side.”*

I remember [that] at the time, a colleague for Savannah, Mr. Anthony Eden, said to me, *“Was that necessary?”* I said to Mr. Eden, *“Yes, it was very necessary; the Premier reminded us of the job, and the importance the Opposition plays in our democracy,”* and I can honestly say, Madam Speaker, I expected nothing less from the Opposition, in terms of what they were going to bring.

Madam Speaker, I will accept that the Members opposite have more years of experience in Government than I do, having only been on the Government side now for around nineteen months. Equally, Madam Speaker, except for the Member for Red Bay and the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman, I can say, that while the Members opposite may have more experience being on the Government side, I have more experience being on the Opposition side.

Madam Speaker, with that said, I look back at my own track record here. I found my manifesto, and I looked at the 2017-2018 and the 2018-2019 sessions—pretty much my first two years. During that period of time, Madam Speaker, I brought thirteen Motions. Thirteen. That's just me, 1-3. Thirteen. When I look at the number of Motions coming from the Opposite side during the same period of time, I can recall the music and dancing one, the stamp duty one and this traffic Motion. Three!

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: You will get your time when I wrap up.

Three Motions, Madam Speaker; so, thirteen Motions from me and me alone in the same period of time versus three opposite: music and dancing, traffic and the stamp duty one, which the Government accepted the stamp duty one, and the music one.

Madam Speaker, I say that to say this: when I look back at the number of Motions that I brought, to the Government's credit—and, again, I will give Jack his jacket—the vast majority of the Motions I brought in Opposition were accepted by the Government. Of course, many of them didn't go anywhere. They said they would consider them; they considered them and did nothing but, Madam Speaker, here is the experience being in the Opposition bench taught me.

I can honestly say when I brought a Motion, my good friend from Bodden Town East would be one of the first persons I would call to say, *"John-John, I am bringing a Motion on so, so, and so. Speak to your guys them, and see if they will support it for me."* Sometimes, Madam Speaker, I would call the previous Member for Prospect, Mr. Harris, who was the Government's whip, and say, *"Austin, I need a little favour from you. I want to do this. Can you help me?"* Madam Speaker, I will tell you, the Government bench was always accommodating on different Motions. I can say that the Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman was always a gentleman whenever you want something, and I can say the same of the Member for George Town South.

You go through the process of trying to drum-up support because at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, sitting on the Opposition bench, being in the minority, you cannot get anything done without the support of the Government Members and at that time Madam Speaker, it was not as though they were going to vote this way and this way and this way. They were a pack, a group—wherever one went, the rest of them were going that way. That's the way politics is, but it requires the ability, Madam Speaker, to reach across the aisle and say, I am doing this, I want to get this done.

When I look at this Motion, Madam Speaker, not one iota of consultation, at least for me, where someone would have come and said, *"You know Chris, DP, whatever, I want to do this. We recognise this is an issue. What can we do to work with you guys with it?"* Zero, zilch, nada. I listened to the opening contribution and I said, *"Okay, everybody has been busy, et cetera."* It is one that just started the same adversarial style of politics—which is fine, I don't mind it; but it is not an approach that says, *"Let us work together, let us recognise that this is a problem."*

Madam Speaker, I will say this much, the Premier took responsibility for the traffic situation even though he himself was a victim and [was] stuck in it

that night as was I, and many other Members, but the truth is that what happened in George Town that Friday night, the one night that triggered this Motion, is what those of us in the Eastern districts have to live with almost every single day! We have children doing homework in cars on the way down in the morning because their parents have to get them up so early.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, we are about improving people's quality of lives. There are at least 10,000 employees that are affected in the Eastern districts. In a service-based economy, when you take an average hourly salary, multiply it by 5 [and] multiply it by 52, we are talking about a problem that runs anywhere from \$50 to \$100 million a year in lost productivity of people being stuck in traffic. This is not the quality of life we want for anybody.

Madam Speaker, when you look at the definition of health as per the World Health Organisation, it says: **"A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not just the absence of diseases and infirmity."** Madam Speaker, it is that mental and social well-being that many of our people are struggling and dealing with. My family is not immune, none of my colleagues here is immune; but I can say this much, Madam Speaker, not to pick on people in George Town Central, George Town North, George Town West, and George Town East who are already in George Town, who don't have to come from so far.

Madam Speaker; the time of the morning at which the Members for East End and North Side leave and are stuck in traffic—

An Hon. Member: 5 o'clock.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: 5 o'clock for the Minister for North Side. Always one of the first persons in because, point blank, if he doesn't leave North Side from 5:00am, he is not going to get out here; and worse for him when we run late at night in Parliament. It is sometimes 10, 11 o'clock at night by the time he reaches home; turn around two times and come back. I'm even worried about his health, for the hours that he keeps, but you know what Madam Speaker? Many Caymanian families go through the same thing every day. They get up and do it.

When we started out, Madam Speaker, we decided we didn't just want to focus on the economic metrics. We wanted to focus on the quality of life metrics also. It requires a tectonic shift, a cultural shift in the way we do business here in the Cayman Islands and, Madam Speaker, there is right. I can say that the Member for Red Bay was right in certain aspects. We have to have the difficult conversation with regards to building heights, development, et cetera.

This is a problem that requires a holistic solution. It is not going to be a Band-Aid, a one-size-fits-all because people can talk about cars all they want, at the end of the day you could own five cars, [but] you can only drive one. The issue isn't just about the number of cars—the number of people on the road at the same time also generates traffic. We saw the report from the NRA. We have people converging literally into one section: George Town. There are some government services that are not essential to the public in terms of public-facing which could be in other parts of the island [to] start moving traffic elsewhere. These are the kinds of things that are required.

You know, Madam Speaker, the Premier raised a point. When you look at the report that was done since June, 2020 I can tell you now, having sat in the Government, we have to learn to walk and chew gum. It can't be that everybody is focused on one thing. As I say to some people sometimes, I just have to trust that the Minister and their team have done the necessary work, because if we are going to try and do every single thing that every Minister does, you will never get anything done.

This is not what governance is about, this is not what Government is about; and I can tell you, Madam Speaker: Yes, the Opposition have their job to do. Equally, I can say to anyone publicly that after being sworn in as a Minister of Government, one of the first persons who said to me, *"Chris, it's important to me that the country does well. If you need advice, need anything, pick up the phone and call me"*, was the Member from Red Bay, Madam Speaker. That is what he said to me—*"Pick up the phone and call me anytime."*

I recognise, Madam Speaker, that their job is to keep the Government accountable, and in truth and in fact I must say, when they do come, it actually even gives us a chance to stop our own issues that we have on this side and unite us, so they are actually doing the country a favour sometimes in terms of what they do because, at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, this is still an adversarial system. It is not a system for the weak of heart.

Democracy is still about competing ideas, competing priorities, competing for resources. There are things I want to get done; there are things the Minister of Tourism wants to get done; there are things the Minister of Planning wants to get done, and I can tell you it is an argument as to who can get the limited resources.

Madam Speaker, we have problems here in Cayman and I want you to think about this: Earlier today I gave out the Moody's Investors rating. The Cayman Islands have the same rating as the United Kingdom. We are three notches from the top of the list, but most importantly, when you look at some of the countries that we are in front of, they are countries that can go in a backroom and print money.

Madam Speaker, we do not have that ability, yet the mighty United States, who can go inside and print money left, right, and centre, still has a ton-load of domestic problems. In the last two years, Madam Speaker, the total amount of US dollars in circulation went from \$4 trillion to \$20 trillion—\$16 trillion increase printing money, and their people still have problems. New York still has traffic, LA still has traffic.

The bottom line, and the point I am making, Madam Speaker, [is that] you cannot spend your way out of this problem. It's going to require a cultural shift in the way in which we do things. It is going to require either different working hours, changing where and what time people go to school, what time people go to work. It is going to require a holistic approach.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you: Every single Member in this house is faced with traffic one way or the other because even just to get around town itself in the middle of the day is a problem. Even on a Saturday, you can't move around town. It is a problem, so I am not going to sit down and tell anybody that there is going to be a silver bullet, there is going to be a magical approach, but the approach that will carry, is the political will to get it done for our people—

An Hon. Member: That is right.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: And if we are going to sit here, and just trying to score brownie points, it is not going to work.

Earlier on the Minister was criticized for the roads that he is doing and a million and one stuff, and I was saying to myself, *"but where did he get all that money from?"* and I'm running through the numbers thinking of how many 11.5s or sections 12 we did. Then it hit me, Madam Speaker—Sarjeant, please give one of this to the Speaker and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, because I am going to read from it a little.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: You want a copy too? I got an extra one.

This was an article from *Cayman News Service*, Madam Speaker. After the numbers were off in the last article, I decided to try a different news service, you know. It basically says, *"OAG Finds Pre-Election Abuse of Public Cash"*, and it reads, Madam Speaker:

"The Office of the Auditor General noted an 'unusual spike' in spending by the National Roads Authority during the two months before the 2021 General Election. More than \$11 million was spent between the announcement of the early election and the day of the vote, Auditor General Sue Winspear and her team found during an audit of the NRA, and she said this could indicate political abuse of public funds during the election cam-

paign.” It goes on to say, **“Expenditure in those eight weeks,”**—expenditure in those eight weeks—**“amounted to 88% of the road budget for the first four months of 2021.”**

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: You do not have the report, I read it again for you. She said, **“Expenditure in those eight weeks amounted to 88 per cent of the road budget for the first four months of 2021.”** It goes on to say, **“This was not the first time that a PPM-led administration had upped its spending on roads prior to elections. Winspear said that during the course of the NRA audit her team looked at the previous pre-election period in 2017 and noted a surge in road construction spending then as well”** and...

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Of course, it's good politics. We are sitting here because we campaigned on that kind of behaviour, but listen—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, I understand the politics of what we do sometimes in this House. I can honestly say that when I first got elected in 2017 I went and met with NRA, and they basically said to me that I could get four roads done in my district. They gave me the list of all the roads, the PSI (pounds per square inch) rating, and all the different stuff that needed to be fixed. I had four roads for 2017; four for 2018; four for 2019, and four for 2020. Madam Speaker, I didn't get one.

In 2021—I went from 2017 to 2020. In 2021, I called the Minister and I can honestly say this about the Member for George Town North: He takes calls and he returns calls. I called him and I begged him. I said, *“Man, listen, I need this road, the people them pressuring me. Can you do this for me?”* He did the best that he could, and I got that one road so, sixteen roads in my constituency that I should have gotten for four years—sixteen.

My constituents had to get up and traverse those roads, damage their cars, and even myself Madam Speaker, having to go out and campaign on many of those roads that needed fixing, only to be faced with: *“Boy, Chris, you couldn't get nothing for we. You couldn't get nothing done.”* Hence, Madam Speaker, you cannot expect for those of us in the eastern districts that were neglected—at least I can speak for Bodden Town West. I cannot go to my people, who have been sitting on very bad roads for the past four years that I was elected, and say to them, *“I can't get your road fixed”*, when I'm sitting here now as the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance.

Madam Speaker, what the Minister of Planning did, was to give us, the people of Bodden Town West and the other eastern districts, the needed assistance that was ignored for so long and I tell you what: I want to publicly thank him for doing that for my constituents. I want to thank him. And you know, Madam Speaker, I like Minister “Jay” from Planning. He's a hardworking Minister.

Sometimes Jay can be Jay, and after some meetings I will call him, and he will say to me, *“DP, I know what you are going to say to me—I went too hard, I went too strong.”* I would say, *“Jay, when you're a hammer, everything looks like a nail”*—but you know what? That is the diversity of this group. This is not a group of follow the leader, leader-type stuff. This is a group of independent minded people, and as I said before, Madam Speaker, democracy is still about having differences, having disagreements, having discord, having dissent, but what it says is that through debate, through discussion, through dialogue, we find consensus. This is what politics is about. It's about finding consensus.

I can tell you I have made a public statement in terms of where my preference of building height is. I caveat it by saying this is my personal opinion. Do my other colleagues share it, no; but this is what it is about. This is what democracy is about—it's about ideas and it is what we do here, we debate ideas.

I can honestly say, Madam Speaker, if the Government felt this was a genuine Motion that was interested in solving the traffic problem, we would have accepted it, but I had my doubts from the way the Motion was written, I had my doubts with the timing, and those doubts were removed when the Mover of the Motion started throwing licks on the Government.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: I will confirm—thank you, Premier.

Madam Speaker, I brought over twenty Motions during my time in Opposition. More than twenty, and that was just what I brought, it doesn't include those I seconded and Madam Speaker, one of the reasons I always bring Motions is that it gives me the last chance to talk. As the Mover, you get to speak first, everyone gets to speak, and if you don't like what anyone says you get up in closing and, as the former Member for East End used to say, *“Beat man”*, you know? That has always been the risk.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: No, it is an expression. People know what it means. It is political jargon for when you get up and throw political licks. That is really what it means; but, Madam Speaker, this is not the kind of politics we want at this

stage in our development. As I said when I Tabled the Moody's report, one of the things that the Cayman Islands got very high points for was its political stability and political consensus.

I am not going to sit back and say to anyone that I believe that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition brought this with any ill-will or anything like that. He is doing his job to ensure the Government makes it a priority because that is also part of it. You bring it to put it on the Government radar and say, *"Listen, we have registered it; you better do something about it, because come election time we are going to hold it against you."* It is part of politics, but I can tell you, Madam Speaker, as the Member first and foremost for Bodden Town West, the loss of productivity, the loss of quality of life for my people requires a fix.

Now, Madam Speaker, many people believe that creating the East-West Arterial is going to be the end-all/be-all. I am fully supportive of the East West Arterial for the simple fact of changing population demographics since the 2021 results. Once you cross Savannah Meadows, there is one single road connecting the entire eastern districts, and if there's one traffic accident—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Or even going back to Hurricane Ivan with that [building] there that went out in the middle of the road... I forgot it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Yeah, Cove. What was the name again?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Mariner's Cove. The entire eastern district was cut off.

The East/West Arterial Madam Speaker, was then actually gazetted by Gilbert McLean recognising that the eastern districts needed another avenue to ensure that we can move. Than in any emergency, the people are not left stranded; but, Madam Speaker, I can equally say to people [that] I want the EIA done for the simple fact that the proposed road will be running behind my district of Bodden Town West—and, you know, Madam Speaker? That area is the runoff for my area.

I already have an area in Northward where, because a development happened across from them, every time it rains now there is a flooding issue because where the water would naturally run, it is now being backed-back and people's homes are getting flooded. I cannot sit and trade people to say, *yes, I am going to build a road to get you into town quicker*, but guess what? Every single time heavy rains or hurri-

cane season come around, I will be one of them that their house is flooded.

It cannot be a situation where you get a road, but it comes at the risk of your house being flooded. That is not responsible, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: You understand?

I can tell you in Bodden Town West we go from 6 ft. above sea level to 62 ft. above sea level—but I know where the water runs, so when I met with NRA and they showed me where the road was and I saw the water table, I said *"Hold on; back up, back up, back up. You ain't flooding out my people, because I can guarantee you one thing: they may forgive me for traffic, for being stuck in traffic, but if their house gets flooded..."*

When you're talking about the one asset that people spend most of their money on, the person's castle, I am *not* going to run the risk of their homes being flooded, just to get a road in—that would be highly irresponsible but Madam Speaker, the Minister has been working on getting the roads done. The Premier is pushing his people to get the EIA done, and simultaneously, Minister Bryan is working on getting a solution to our public transport system.

In short Madam Speaker, these initiatives are being done simultaneously. These initiatives tell the country that this Government can walk and chew gum, it's not a situation of having a report sitting there but because of COVID you couldn't do anything with it, you have to multitask. That's what it is. That is what it comes down to. If anyone believes that this is not a priority for the Members on this side, who are most affected by traffic... You want to shut down a Caucus meeting or something, bring up traffic.

The Member for Savannah, the Member for East End, the Member for Bodden Town East, the Member for North Side, the Member for Prospect, and dare I even say the Member for Red Bay too, because right in Red Bay is where the bottleneck is and of course, my people. We are talking tens of thousands of families being affected in terms of lost productivity and quality of life.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, work is being done.

I can tell you it is a major priority for this Government and that today is the first time I saw this report that was Tabled, but the truth and the fact is, Madam Speaker, [that] many of the data assumptions that would have gone into this report would have been materially changed. To use the line, "I've been reliably informed", the initial results provided to me, coming out of the Labour Force Survey at the end of Septem-

ber was a population of 81,700. When we did the census last October, Madam Speaker, we were at 71,105. In less than a year, our population increased by 14.9 per cent.

Madam Speaker, sitting on the opposite side, I even remember when we were looking at tourism, et cetera. At that time, we had roughly 300 properties in the Airbnb pool. Today, it is almost 1600. These were properties that were previously inside the domestic rental market. Now, they are outside of the domestic rental market and properties that were once renting for \$1,800 to \$2,000 are now \$4 and \$5,000 simply from supply going down and demand going up.

There are many things that we have to work on, but you know what I can say, Madam Speaker? Neither this Government or the previous Government and the Members of the Opposition have a monopoly on the solutions. I can go further to say that the solutions for this country are not just from inside this House—they do not have to come from Members in this House.

We have many bright and intelligent people. Some are new Caymanians, indigenous Caymanians and some who just call the Cayman Islands home. People who have come from countries, see some of the challenges that they have and what needs to be done but, Madam Speaker, at the same time, we are also recovering from COVID. I would love to say that the Government has an ability, a printing machine in the back to go and print money that we can just throw at the solution, but that will also be irresponsible.

We still have families and industries that are recovering, tourism is still not back to where it sat. The Minister for Social Development, you know, we saw earlier this year that he brought the legislation to even start to improve the way in which we offer assistance to our people. Again, we still have limited resources. We have seen the impact of inflation and what it is doing to the quality of our people's lives.

These are real problems. The traffic is one, inflation, universal health care coverage. You know, crime is on the rise. I mean, we have genuine problems in this country, and Madam Speaker, the Members opposite have too much experience. They have been elected too long and have enough knowledge to know that, if anything, the Members on this side have been accommodating and if you want to bring a motion that can pass, we have no issues sitting with you and working with you.

Madam Speaker, you know the irony of this? The very report that they are talking about today, the former Leader of the Opposition filed a similar motion and withdrew it to give the Member for Prospect at the time, the ability to bring a motion to deal with this. Why? We think it would have been better for the Government to have brought it because, if anyone could have had the resources and the ability to get this done, it would have been a Member of the Govern-

ment as opposed to a Member of the Opposition. That is cooperation, that's what it takes.

Madam Speaker, in the last go around we had many meetings in that committee room sorting out some of the differences that were not discussed on this Floor; this is what cooperation is about. We are not even at the halfway mark. At some point, you know, twelve, eighteen months before the next election, I expect the Opposition to ramp-up and start throwing licks—I expect that; but for right now, Madam Speaker, it is about representing our people, working together, and finding the solution.

When you look at the qualifications of even the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, this is a former Managing Partner of a big-4 accounting firm, the type of firm that Government and other companies hire to find solutions for them. Such is the calibre of people we have, but if you want something done, let us work together. This is not a Bodden Town West problem; is not a Newlands problem, is not a Prospect problem, is not a Savannah problem. It's a Cayman Islands problem, and that's what we need to focus on.

Madam Speaker, I would have loved to have been proven wrong and say that this Motion was meant to kick start us really moving this as a priority. I would have loved to have said that, but I knew, the night the Premier got up and took responsibility. I said, he just opened a political door, but you know what, Madam Speaker? That's what leadership is, someone has to take responsibility.

Yes, it was the Commissioner who ordered the closed road; yes, there were 16 accidents at the same time; yes, there were other people organising the Pirates' Week activity, not Members of the elected Government, but, at the end of the day, the country still needed someone to say, "You know what? This is wrong, it is a problem that needs to be fixed," and there was nobody better placed to do it than the Premier himself.

Madam Speaker, I can say to the Members opposite: I know the Minister of Transport has offered invitations in terms of some of the things that are being worked on. I know the Minister of Planning talks very regularly with Members opposite, and if they are really and truly serious for us to find a way to deal with this, the Government is more than willing to work with Members opposite. What we are not going to do, is play politics with this very important issue which is affecting and impacting the quality of people's lives, their mental and social state. It's too far from the next election to be going there.

You can hold the Government to account, you can criticise the Government, and I expect nothing less. That is the job of the Opposition within our democracy, but if it's just about scoring points, I'm sorry. There are far more on this side who can shoot a three-pointer, than on the other side. We are willing to work with any Member opposite if they are genuinely serious about the problems.

Maybe the one good thing that came out of the traffic jam in George Town, and the Premier taking responsibility for it, is that it created the opportunity for us to ventilate many of these issues but the wider population also got an opportunity to see what the people in my district of Bodden Town West and the entire Eastern districts deal with on a daily basis.

Madam Speaker, as I close, there is another song that was a top song in 1967, that would have given me a real good opportunity to solidify what I want, but you know what, Madam Speaker, Christmas is nearing. I know what it is like to be on that side. Like I said, many Members on that side extended a courtesy to me and I am not a forgetful person because, like I said, the nineteen Motions or thereabouts that I got passed in the last administration, could not have been done without the cooperation of the Government.

I have no ill will; I wish them all well, and like I said, if they are really serious about sitting down and having a discussion with regards to traffic, I would be more than happy to have that discussion because, whatever the solution is, it will require money. It's going to require money to be approved by this Parliament. As the old political saying goes, *it takes cash to care*, you can tell people you feel their pain all you want, it still takes cash to care.

With that Madam Speaker, I will be voting no against this Motion not because I don't believe there is a problem, but because, in my opinion, which has been confirmed by the Mover's remarks, this has just been one to score political points. If the Opposition really wants to hold this Government accountable, it really needs to do a better job than that because I can tell you, having sat there, having more Opposition experience than any Member except two of them, that's not the work of the Opposition. If the goal of the Opposition, which is also the government-in-waiting is to return to this side, they have to do a better job than they are doing. This is not the politics we want for the Cayman Islands and this is the kind of politics that we need to make sure never finds foot in this country.

There is no *garrison politics* and that kind of stuff. We are all Caymanians here, and many people have come here, worked hard, integrated into our community and have become part of the fabric. The diversity of this House now reflects the type of Cayman Islands that we have. If in the next session, the Opposition files a Motion, or even something similar, that really genuinely looks to solve the problem, I will be the first to support it and I will be the first to lobby my colleagues to support it.

Madam Speaker, thank you all very much.

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister for Health and Wellness.

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner, Minister of Health and Wellness and Home Affairs, Elected Member for Prospect: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I know the day has been long. I don't want to belabour the Motion before us, that we're lending our contributions to, anymore, but I think it would not have been fitting for me, as the Minister of Health and Wellness to not have lent some sort of commentary to Private Member's Motion No. 7 of 2022-2023: Implementing the Recommendations in the 2020 Report from the Committee on Vehicle Imports and Transportation.

Madam Speaker, a number of things have already been stated by my colleagues and, of course, the Opposition, and it is so interesting to avoid repeating much that has already been said, but more so fitting to highlight the fact that this is a report that obviously was prepared by my predecessor, who was the then Councillor of the Premier. My constituent, my dear friend, and someone whom I worked with, tirelessly, in the community back in the day. It's interesting [that] as the Minister of Health and Wellness, and the Elected Member for Prospect, being a part of this unique and dynamic Government [and] independently elected, what I have been able to deliver in 18/19 months, with the support of my colleagues, is at least two roads—not just a report.

We're all about solving the issues. We're all, as an independent team, not talk but action. We are not waiting 'till the eve of 2025 to deal with roads. I got elected because I gave the people my word, my promise, that they will be taken care of. I also gave them assurance that I would work with an elected government and anyone who I know would allow me to do good by and for, the people of Prospect.

I can recall volunteering and making presentations to the then two elected members for Red Bay and Prospect. Volunteering to go and stand up at Poindexter with the traffic police to assist with people coming off of Shamrock Road clogging up the roads within the Prospect constituency and Red Bay; to assist and allowing people to continue the free flowing of roads there.

I can even recall making the suggestion of traffic wardens to give the retirees hope as well as job opportunities. Where has it fallen? It would have appeared to have fallen on deaf ears, yet tonight, in this season, we are here deliberating on this Motion that really is truly full of theatrics and, like my colleagues stated, trying to earn points. I am here to be as concise, open, transparent, and honest with the people of Prospect as I can be, and thus why I support doing it properly.

Our country has lacked proper vision and infrastructure upgrades for decades. As my colleague stated in his presentation, the first eight weeks of 2021, 88 per cent of the budget was placed on roads. Where was Prospect, in that? All we got was patching of holes; that was all. Out of all of that, what can the people of Prospect say that they got?

Let me tell you something though, in eighteen months the people got more than twelve drains in one

area alone that saved their homes—Bedrock Circle, in the back of Raven Avenue. It was becoming, unfortunately, a possible other Randyke Gardens. We addressed the swales in Paradise Palms, which people know as the Frank Hall Homes. I am still working closely with both the Ministers of Education and Roads to deal with our children standing on the road at the top of Adventure Street. You're talking about an extension of that bypass? I am in full support of it, but it has to be collective. It is a disaster waiting to happen with the children standing there in the morning. This is what these reports do.

The Raven Avenue and Spotts-Newlands people who fall in the constituency of Prospect will know, that I am not just wind. I am a woman of action because I am working with the Minister who has never ever not acted—he could've acted a little quicker, but I am thankful. Why? Because we all established the fact that we have our constituents' needs to meet, and it is quite obvious that for almost two decades Prospect's roads have been neglected. I have personally driven through those roads with the Member and the NRA crews.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Sabrina T. Turner: Poindexter and Patrick's Island do not fall in Prospect, that's Red Bay—I can't even vote for myself; but still, they're all neighbouring roads. You talk about *garrison politics*, yet we say we are all one people. It is blatant, what was happening. Mahogany, Mangrove, and Dogwood got paved and the crews are now working at Raven; it pained my heart. Now you see reports stating how much money was spent in a short time *to fool the people*.

Well, I will tell you what, the people didn't get it wrong in Prospect, because I am showing we will work. We will address the culverts, we will deal with the swales. Whatever input is needed for future development and amendments to planning law, to assist us with infrastructural improvements, will be done. This is not a political promise because you say this is an adversarial place? This is a place of democracy, it is a place for us to speak to our people. This is to let them know what we are doing for them collectively.

I totally agree, that if this Motion being debated today is because of the Pirates' Week shut down, well, at least we got one thing that my predecessor did that we can show to the people of Prospect, a report. Where it will go? Not by me, I cannot support it. Why? Because we are already working on it. It's proven; the people in Prospect are seeing it—we are all living in this country together. The effects that traffic has on people's lives, their mental health; it is known to have serious effects on Type 2 diabetes, adrenaline rush, heart attacks and strokes. I can only imagine what those poor children and families go through every morning, and it has to stop—but it's no political game.

This is factual, and this Government is committed to living up to our promise, but doing it properly.

If the people had proper public transport, I can assure you, I myself would have taken it. For the first year after getting into office, my car broke down and my husband and I carpooled. I know that we got accustomed to jumping in our cars and moving when we want and I saw the challenges—he being on shift; me, not knowing what my hours would be. I get it, but this is what this Government is committed to doing, making sure we look at it as a 360 approach, and this is why the multiple NRA meetings throughout the districts have been had.

This Government has been very open, keeping the lines of communication open with their people in addressing the issues that can be dealt with now. I have people who are coming up to me and I have personally driven into the Prospect constituency after rain. Places that would flood no longer flood because we did the simple thing: listening to the people and taking action, not just blowing smoke.

The biggest thing we have to do is make sure that in our future roads' development we have storm water management and soft shoulders wide enough so that bus stops can be placed safely off the road to protect our children, to protect our future. This is no longer the place to only talk about it because it sounds good; people want a government that is action-driven, and you are seeing the beginning of that with what we have done in nineteen months.

Bipartisan politics are the key to success. I have no clue what it is like to be in the Opposition and, for those who have actually had the experience, congratulations to them but I have a job, no matter what side of the aisle in this honourable House and in this position, to serve the people—or at least make myself available as often as possible. Most importantly, listen to them, provide the resources and not just talk for political points because sooner or later it will come to roost.

I gave you my word that I would be concise and to the point. I cannot support this Motion because it is already a work in progress and in many of the areas the report card is in, and it can be proven. It is only up and up from here with what improvements we will make holistically, and not piecemeal to try and gain political votes, so Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence and for giving me this opportunity. I am a woman about principle, facts and being concise. Thank you.

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]* Does the mover wish to exercise his right of reply?

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

Madam Speaker, I will exercise restraint in my reply but I struggle, really, to know where to start because we have been back, round, front, centre on this whole issue this afternoon and quite frankly, clearly stirred up a hornet's nest I didn't anticipate.

Madam Speaker, I will try to summarise things. It's clear to me this Motion is not being accepted. I'm disappointed, really, in the Minister's response, in not accepting it. At the outset, he said he thought the Motion was premature, those were his words and it was one sided. I have to say, "*say wha? Premature?*" We just spent the last three hours debating this and saying what a problem we have. There's nothing more relevant that we have discussed today than this. There is nothing more pertinent right now.

Madam Speaker, in rejecting it, the Minister made reference to three things I was recommending with regard to the recommendations of the Committee. I made no such recommendations. Madam Speaker, I gave three reasons why I would not make specific recommendations. That's where I went, so whether the Minister misheard or didn't hear, I don't know, but it was just dead wrong in terms of what I said.

Madam Speaker, I listened to everybody's speeches this afternoon and their contribution to the debate. Honestly, I thank everyone who got up and spoke because one thing has become clear to me, we all agree there is a problem. I said so at the outset, *I hope we can all agree we have a problem*. I had hoped that by asking the Government to consider the report and recommendations of the Committee that were put together in 2020, it would find favour.

I had no idea, no knowledge of what was going on within the Minister's Ministry with regard to this; however, he acknowledges there is a report or some document to come next month that will outline what the Government's plans are and he's already admitted much of what is in this report is already in theirs. I don't know what would be the real issue with them saying, *well we'll accept the report, we'll see if there is anything else in there that we can include in our plan that we are bringing forth*.

The Minister of Tourism in his debate, spent much time talking about moving jobs to the eastern districts. Okay, *that may be a point we need to consider, let's add it to the list*, and really took exception, I think, to my criticism. My statement with regard to public transport was that we really need to get a proper public transport system in place; but I think what really irritated him was the level of criticism at eighteen-months' delay because we know when we left there, there was an RFP that was ready to go and that was the whole point of my contribution.

Now I want to turn to a comment by the Deputy Premier and the figures he raised with regard to what I said were the budget excess in car duties or vehicle charges. I would say to the Minister, I don't have the figures here with me. I would like to go back

and look at where I got the numbers from. I didn't just pull numbers out of the air, but I will try to find out where I got my numbers from and let him know how I came to that figure. I won't be able to do so until I can get home or back into the office to do it.

He also went to great expense Madam Speaker, on this article that appeared in the usually biased *Cayman News Service* [CNS] on the 21st October [2022], titled "OAG finds pre-election abuse of public cash". Abuse, okay? The Minister read from the article which says, "**More than \$11 million was spent between the announcement of the early election and the day of the vote, Auditor General Sue Winspear and her team found during an audit of the NRA, and she said this could indicate political abuse of public funds during the election campaign.**". The operative word she said was "could". Did she say she found any abuse? No. Absolutely not, and there is a reason she didn't say so—because there was none.

What happened in the period leading up to the election was that there was a tremendous amount of unspent funds in the 2020 budget because of the lockdown. Work did not continue on all the roadworks that were undergoing, and we took a decision to move funds out of 2020 and put them in the first quarter of 2021, to allow the roadworks to continue because we knew that upon re-opening, the issues and problems with the traffic would only resume and continue. That was the whole reason, yet this kind of garbage is spewed about the place as if there was something untoward being said and done. Nothing of the sort—

The Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin: And the elections were brought forward six weeks...

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, and the elections were brought forward six weeks too so, Madam Speaker, this is only introduced to try and discredit us and get political mileage out of it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Several members have now imputed, Madam Speaker, that somehow the whole genesis for this Motion has to do with the gridlock that we experienced during Pirates' Fest. Nothing further from the truth, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Really? I simply mentioned that as an example, it certainly brought the issues to light. Come on people, be reasonable. That's just utter nonsense.

Madam Speaker, as I listened to everything tonight, one thing that, for sure, comes out of the debate from the Motion is we know there is a problem; and my hope and prayer is—well, I have to say it has been so thoroughly and adequately vented this evening with all the rhetoric. At some point it even sounded like people were campaigning for re-election.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: You're right, it probably should start from now. Anyway, at the very least there is an acknowledgement, and I think an agreement, amongst the nineteen of us here this evening, that there is a problem. I hope that now we will see some movement and things will actually be done. If I could have accomplished that today, with this Motion, even though I am disappointed it was not accepted, then I think I would have accomplished what I set out to do. We've got to deal with it, we've got to get moving.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you and wish everyone a pleasant evening.

The Speaker: The question now is, that the Government considers as a matter of urgency, reviewing the recommendations in the report and publishing a response to the recommendations setting out which recommendations will be implemented.

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

AYES AND NOES.

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: May we have a division Madam Speaker?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Division No. 5-2022

Ayes: 6

Hon. Roy McTaggart
Mr. Joseph Hew
Hon. Sir Alden
McLaughlin
Mr. Moses Kirkconnell
Ms. Barbara Conolly
Mr. David Wight

Noes: 12

Hon. G. Wayne Panton
Hon. Christopher Saunders
Hon. Kenneth Bryan
Hon. Sabrina Turner
Hon. Johany Ebanks
Hon. André Ebanks
Hon. Bernie Bush
Hon. Juliana
O'Connor-Connolly
Hon. Dwayne Seymour
Hon. Issac Rankine
Hon. Heather Bodden
Hon. Dr. W. McKeever Bush

The Speaker: We have a total of 6 Ayes and 12 Noes; therefore the Noes have it. This Motion has failed.

Private Member's Motion No. 7 of 2022-2023 Negatived.

Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2022-2023
Motion to create a taskforce North Sound
water-sports operation and a Moratorium on the
granting of new wildlife interactions zone licences

The Speaker: The Elected Member for West Bay West.

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, I rise to move Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2022-2023 which reads as follows:

WHEREAS for years there have been concerns over water-sports operations in the North Sound which the Member for West Bay Central had identified and began work on that matter;

AND WHEREAS there is continuing evidence of local water-sports operators being put in a less competitive position and disadvantaged in an industry that was built by Caymanians;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT the Government considers setting up a task force inclusive of a Member of the Department of Environment, the Cayman Islands Coast Guard and local persons of knowledge with our snorkelling and fishing industries to address the various issues affecting local water-sports operators;

BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Government considers placing a moratorium on the granting of new wildlife interaction zone licences until such time as the task force has reported its findings back to Government.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder to the Motion?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker, I second Private Member's Motion No. 4.

The Speaker: The Motion has been moved and seconded and is now open for debate.

Does the Mover of the Motion wish to speak thereto; or does he intends to move an amendment to the Motion at this time?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to move an amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 4 2022-2023. In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 25(1) and (2) I, the Honourable W. McKeever Bush, Elected Member for West Bay West, seek to move the following amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2022-2023.

That the Motion be amended by inserting at the end of the be it therefore resolved section, the words "within nine months". The new resolve section will now read "be it therefore further resolved, that the Government considers placing a moratorium on the granting of new wildlife interactions zone licences until such time as the task force has reported its findings back to Government within nine months."

The Speaker: Is there a seconder to the amendment?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker, I second the amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 4.

The Speaker: The amendment has been moved. Does the Mover wish to speak on the amendment?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, I would rather speak fully to the now amended Motion or will we speak to the amendment? Yes, I will briefly, Madam Speaker.

The amendment seeks to lengthen the time from the original five months to nine months, to give much more time to Government and the task force to be able to get things done. As far as the moratorium, it would give them that much more time to look at the situation and therefore, hopefully, bring the moratorium.

The Speaker: Does anyone else wish to speak on the amendment? *[Pause]*

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does anyone else wish to speak on the amendment? Otherwise we'll move to vote on the amendment.

Does the Mover to the amendment wish to reply?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: No, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: The question is, that the Motion be amended as follows "that the Government considers placing a moratorium on the granting of the new wildlife interaction zone licences until such time as the task force has reported its findings back to Government within nine months."

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The amendment to Private Member's Motion No. 4 of 2022-2023 passed.

The Speaker: The Motion as amended is now open for debate. Does the Mover of the Motion wish to speak on the amended Motion?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the Motion seeks to address matters connected to the water-sports business by doing two things: setting up a task force that knows the business and the issues they face, and come up with solutions and report back to Government in nine months. The Motion also asks that a moratorium be put in place so that no new licences are granted while that task force is working.

Madam Speaker, there are many complex issues to that situation that can only be addressed if Government sets up a task force to sift through these long felt issues of Caymanian ownership of operations, and sandbar capacity. As I said, there are many, many issues Madam Speaker, too many, I think for this Parliament to sit down to debate and try to get it right through that. The best thing to do is to get a task force set up with knowledgeable people, sit down, go through all the issues and come back to Government.

Parliament should resolve to establish a task force or working group to consider the issues and consult with relevant stakeholders with regard to the WIZ [Wildlife Interaction Zone] and the North Sound water-sport licences and such task force to report to Cabinet within nine months with recommendations which will benefit Caymanians operating in this sector of the water-sports industry; establish a moratorium on new WIZ licences for one year from the 1st February 2023, with the following exceptions to that moratorium:

- (a) a new licence application by an existing operator to replace a licence that was previously held from 1st February 2020 onwards; and
- (b) allowance should be made for a WIZ licence to be temporarily transferred.

These are considerations that should be made for transfer to another vessel or a new replacement licence granted if the vessel licence is being permanently replaced. These are things that the Government would take into consideration whether it takes it on itself or whether it puts a task force together and be guided by the task force.

Madam Speaker, for decades the provisions of North Sound snorkelling and boat tours has been to preserve of multigenerational Caymanians. Despite having the history, the experience and investment in that business, these Caymanians now find their livelihoods threatened by circumstances which require attention by this House and by Government through informed advice.

Madam Speaker, the severe financial impact of the COVID travel restrictions has significantly weakened those established businesses. The past nine months have not been a sufficient period for these businesses to fully recover and pay off the debt accumulated during the travel restrictions. Visitor arrivals have not fully recovered and yet cruise visitor arrivals are forecast to drop significantly in the coming years. New businesses are being created and granted wildlife interaction zone licences without any requirement for qualifications, experience, or even public liability insurance, some of them.

Ad hoc, opportunistic businesses are popping up, creating further oversupply and driving down prices, threatening the livelihood of the established operators. The same way that anyone Madam Speaker, with a car can't go out and offer taxi services on Friday nights, simply having access to a boat should not entitle someone to offer boat trips on the weekend, just so. Commercial operations by inexperienced boaters now frequently create safety hazards to guests and other boats, as well as environmental hazards to our shallow waters and our precious reefs.

Despite a need being recognised for many years, Madam Speaker, there is still no practical way of equitably managing the capacity of the Stingray City Sandbar with the result being a *wild west*—free for all, overcrowding, and a race to the bottom pricing. Therefore, Madam Speaker, it is now time for consideration of regulations, restrictions and licensing requirements to be introduced for the North Sound Water-sports Zone consisting of the fringe reef and all the water areas inside the reef.

Those considerations, Madam Speaker, could include segmentation of the water-sports trade and business licence to specify a North Sound Zone water-sports business licence. There could be a more restrictive definition of Caymanian in relation to ownership of a business holding a North Sound Zone water-sports licence. There could be a requirement for a higher than 60 per cent Caymanian share ownership for limited companies holding North Sound Zone water-sports licences and, further, a requirement for a minimum percentage of Caymanian shareholders having active, operational participation in a business holding a North Sound Zone water-sports licence.

Madam Speaker, this is what is happening in the North Sound and before I move on, I want to thank you for all the work that you put in before you were elected as Speaker into this issue, because I know you grew up in Boatswain Bay, West Bay. You grew up being able to go into the North Sound. Your father operated there, and your grand-father was a good fisherman. You know the area, you know what North Sound is and, therefore, you have a good handle on what to do.

Madam Speaker, some of what is happening in the water sports industry, there are people from overseas who come, they see an opportunity and they

have money and they offer our Caymanians 10, 15, sometimes maybe less per cent—and that is a Caymanian operation that has been in the business and has clientele already, Madam Speaker, so they can offer people they already have. If that's only 5, 10, 15 per cent and that person already has a clientele, I imagine what they offer a Caymanian who has nothing but a little boat or might not even have a boat.

I want to say Madam Speaker, we know that these situations exist. They don't only exist in water-sports, they exist in many other areas in Cayman.

Madam Speaker, I am not about making any loss of a possible investment of a Caymanian regardless of how little it is, but that is one of the issues that I hope the task force will deal with.

Madam Speaker, as I said, it's not about seeing anybody who can get a chance for investment go down the drain, but we need to ensure that the local person who has taken on a partner, with that partner having a majority, that the local person is safeguarded and that is not happening. They are taking on a partner, and they are getting very little out of it.

Madam Speaker, I'm a free market person but there—and we have said this often in this House too—there are certain businesses that Caymanians can do, that should be left for the preservation of our local people. Now I've travelled to the Bahamas and other countries and they set out a list of small businesses that is only left for locals, meaning local citizens; if they come from the moon, and they are a citizen so be it, they are a citizen but that's not what is happening now.

Years ago, the LCCL [Local Companies (Control) Licence] was created and they had to advertise and there were millions of dollars needed, but there are businesses today that Caymanians can and are able to reach that they don't need a partner, they don't need a partner. What they do need are regulations and assistance from Government to ensure that they move along.

Government has set up through small business operations, safeguards and assistance; and I think that we—and I am hoping that is one of the things the task force will do—as I said, I didn't want to come here and make the world believe that I know everything about everything. No, and I don't think anybody in this House knows everything about everything. That's why I wanted to set up a task force as I said by somebody from the Department of Environment, Coast Guard, and people like Ronnie Anglin, Captain Eugene, different people like that; even Adrien Briggs if he's able to. These people have knowledge in our local water sports operations.

Beautiful boats are coming in, Madam Speaker, but no longer must we think that because you are local, you can just go in a “bath pan” and take tourists out. No; the travelling public today is very discerning, and want the best when they come, they want to go aboard and be comfortable in a good boat, the best

that they can get it and sometimes they want it cheap too so our people should understand that people aren't just coming to say, *oh this is the island that time forgot*, so they want to see things like back in the sixties. *Uh uh*, that was the people in the sixties, but not today.

The discerning tourists want the best facilities to utilise, they want good hotels and hotel rooms, they want safe and clean taxis; and good boats to go touring in, water sports and snorkelling. They just don't think that people want to come here, *oh this is an island*—and you hear talk around the place saying, *oh they want us like it was in the fifties*. Oh yeah? They're gone; that travelling public has gone a long time ago. Their grand-children are the ones coming now; they are the ones who want the best. They want the best, so we just can't up and have anybody in any kind of thing operating and dealing with our tourists.

Madam Speaker, those are the things that the North Sound task force would be able to look into and make recommendations.

Madam Speaker, about the protection... As I said, I am a free market person but we have to recognise that there are certain things that our local people need protection for. There's Clinton Ebanks—I saw someone today asking if he's still operating a catamaran because that's what they want. I think they said they were on-island. These people they are naming are quality people that they know and who will give quality service, so we don't need to sit and think that they don't need protection from the big 84 ft. Hatteras that comes in; they do need it. Somebody is fronting, for somebody. As I said, I am not about stopping anyone from making an honest dollar, but we have to safeguard them. It can't be they are just satisfied with anything.

Madam Speaker, the losses that some of those people have taken have been tremendous. I mean, I have been talking to them and I have knowledge of it for a long time [and again] talking to them recently, particularly since the pandemic. During the pandemic, Madam Speaker, some people in the North Sound water-sports operations lost their investment; had to sell their house. I know one company sold five boats, sizeable company, local company; to keep their business alive, sold their two houses and sold five boats so you imagine that's a sizeable operation but they still had to do it during the pandemic to keep their business alive.

Yes, a foreign investor with a Caymanian partner would have lost during the pandemic as well [particularly] during lockdown but that foreign national with that 50 ft. brand new or 84ft. Hatteras, be it catamaran et cetera, they because of their wealth and their ability to sustain their business didn't take the blow the way the Caymanian operator had to endure that blow.

We have to understand that these are things that happen and we have younger Caymanians now

too, who want to get into the business. There's Troy Leacock and others who have now been in the business a couple years, but they were not the traditional ones, but they have been involved. There's a different mind-set, whereas my stepfather who operated in North Sound, the Captain Gleason's, the Mr. Asley Ebanks, Captain Otis, Captain Marvin, Captain Crosby Ebanks, Alfonso Ebanks, Alan Ebanks that age group is gone but they were the ones who started the business.

There are others, of course, you know, people operate in East End, I think some people operate in South Sound—and North Side, yes. I only know most of the people I am associated with in West Bay and grew up with of course but, as I said, those older ones built the industry and kept it alive. Today the North Sound is ram-packed with boats; go to that sandbar. I mean, I don't go overboard and play around any sting-rays, I'm not so *fool-fool*—but people do.

It's an attraction, but if you see some of the videos and the amount of people who are there, I think we have reached a point where we have to put something in place and I'm not saying how many boats, where to anchor, et cetera. That's left up to the task force, but there has to be some control or else the North Sound we want, what we have, what we love, will have some erosion, so we cannot continue to just leave it alone.

We have to let those persons—I am not going to say so out of greediness, they could be free market believers like I am, but some of them are so strong in their belief and in their independence of being a Caymanian that they feel you know, *let me do what I want to do*, but you can't do that. Like in everything else, there has to be some rules, some regulations, some carrying capacity for the North Sound and its protection.

Madam Speaker, I will stop there because it is getting late. Hopefully, the House will accept the Motion.

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

The Honourable Minister for Tourism and Transport.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I'll be really, really quick.

I rise on behalf of the Government as the Minister of Tourism to say that we will be giving support to this Motion as it is in line with our Strategic Policy Statement 2022-2024 under Broad Outcome 10, No. 4 which says, “**encourage stronger Caymanian participation in the industry**” and 4b “**to promote greater Caymanian ownership of the tourism-related businesses.**”

Obviously, some things will need to be worked out by way of mechanisms with respect to the spirit of the Motion, but in principle it is one that we support

and we are willing to move forward by putting together the necessary things to accomplish the spirit of the Motion. I hope the Opposition will be in support as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish—
The Honourable Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I rise to give some contribution to the Motion I seconded, Private Member's Motion No. 4 and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the work you've done on this. We spoke about it before, in fact, I thought we were even supposed to bring it together at some point so I know the work you've done on it. Obviously, the Member for West Bay West has done such an eloquent job on presenting this case that there's not much more you can actually say, but I thought I'd mention that, as the former Minister of Environment, I had the pleasure of going through this same thing in 2019-2020 where we filed to place a temporary moratorium on the issuance of licences to the wildlife interaction zone or WIZ licences.

Madam Speaker, as said earlier by the Member from West Bay West, in terms of us protecting our people, there must be something that we, as politicians, they elected all 19 of us to protect their interests and their livelihoods. For some people in the public, I know you can hear them screaming *protectionism* or otherwise, but, you know, who are we building for and if we can't protect something for Caymanians, why are we even here so, Madam Speaker, these Caymanians as mentioned by the Member earlier, [are] very knowledgeable in this business and with their offerings; and as a Government, we need to stand for something.

I don't know why it seems so hard, as I've said, when a government stands up and says they are going to protect certain things for Caymanians. In fact, it seems like a bad word for persons who don't really understand what we are trying to do. I look across to Florida with the Indians there where the casinos are placed squarely in their hands because of indigenous Americans. I look to other countries, even Jamaica.

As an area that is protected for indigenous Caymanians, why is it such a big problem when legislators—politicians—in Cayman, say they need to protect things for Caymanians, it seems like a big, big problem? There are fewer of us than there now, really—the transient people who are here. We are now the majority of the minority or the minority of the majority; but I'm sure we are not the majority.

To show the main reason why I second this Motion, on 5th December, 2019 I made a statement in this honourable House which should have been public. The statement read: **“After numerous observations and complaints made to the Department and the Tourism Ministry. The Ministry of Environment**

in consultation with the Ministry of Tourism, after careful consideration and investigation in regards to the Wildlife Interaction Zone (WIZ) and especially the Stingray City, has decided to place a temporary moratorium on WIZ licenses and cap the amounts of boats and passengers that visit on a daily basis.

Currently licensed vessels are not permitted to carry paying passengers into the sandbar area of the Wildlife Interaction Zone after 2pm on weekends and 3pm on Public Holidays. et cetera. The Ministry knows the efforts that have been made by the DOE and the current constraints it has on them so we have teamed up with the Coast Guard attachment to assist us in upholding this moratorium and capping policy. We are quite confident that these new measures put in place will not only give clear guidelines to the user but to add a sense of safety and security to the visitors to our shores whilst creating a better and more intimate experience.”

It goes on to say more, but Madam Speaker, I said I wouldn't be long. We have to stand up as politicians and unite as one when it comes to protecting things for Caymanians. I am not one who is afraid to say it; [nor] am I looking behind me to see who is upset when I say it. I thank the honourable Member from West Bay West for asking me to second this motion, and I commit it to the House.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I shall be even shorter than the Member for Bodden Town East.

Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for the Motion at hand. I believe it is very much timely and, if handled and dealt with in the right way, it would, I think, go a long way towards resolving issues that exist and have existed for some time within this industry.

Madam Speaker, you know, despite the fact that the country is now reopen to tourism, we know that we are operating at a far lesser level of service and demand for tourism services in terms of the numbers of people that are visiting our shores.

I know the water sports operators, while operating, are operating at a much-reduced level of demand and I know that they are struggling to make ends meet—you know, to eke out a living—right now, in this industry. For many of them, it is all they know, and everything in their entire livelihood depends on this year. I know one gentleman, whom I count as a dear friend, is operating at less than 50 per cent of

what he had before, back in 2020 when everything went pear-shaped with COVID 19.

By all accounts, it is going to be a few years before tourism can really get back to the level which we had come to expect, with the vibrancy and growth that was taking place and, while we are showing quite significant increases next year, in terms of stay over tourists, we are still projected to be at about 70 per cent of what it was like in 2019. That's four years later.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: What's that?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, Leader of the Opposition: Absolutely. We support the Motion; I think it is important, I like the idea of including persons from the areas that you mentioned, from the DOE, Coast Guard—local persons of knowledge within the snorkelling/fishing industries to address the issues. They are the ones affected most of all and they are the ones that will have the answers, so we need to put together the right committee and ensure that whatever recommendations they come up with:

1. Can reasonably be implemented;
2. That they can achieve the objectives; and
3. What is probably most important of all: that they are fair and applicable to all so that no one can claim any special treatment, or advantage.

We all want them to succeed in this industry, and here is an opportunity to help us to help them to do that, so I commend the motion as well, and I think I probably speak on behalf of the Opposition with it, that we do support the Motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does any other Member wish to speak? *[Pause]* Does the mover wish to exercise his right of reply?

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I think all that needs to be said at this time has been said. I want to thank my colleague, the Member for Bodden Town East, for seconding the Motion; I certainly want to thank the other Members of the Government, in particular the Minister of Tourism, the Honourable Minister of Commerce, and the Honourable Minister of Heritage and Culture, for their continued support of the issue; and thanks to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, for their support.

As I said—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. W. McKeever Bush: To the House? I didn't ask for that, but maybe the Government will take it into consideration.

Certainly, if they never heard, I will certainly say to them that it was asked, I certainly would hope that we would get to see it at least, you know? Whether something is brought back to the House to be Tabled or passed out to us as Members of the House, so that we ourselves are aware of what the recommendations are. Thank you very much for raising that, because I think it's a good idea for it to be done.

I certainly want to thank the Government, thank my colleagues here who have not spoken but, of course, have given their support, and not just on these issues. Most of us understand the issues, all of us Opposition and Government. As I have said so many times this evening, we know the things that are troubling us, we just need to come to the right consensus amongst ourselves.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The question now is that the Government considers setting up a task force, inclusive of a Member of the Department of Environment, the Cayman Islands' Coast Guard and local persons of knowledge with our snorkelling and fishing industries to address the various issues affecting local water sports operators.

BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Government considers placing a moratorium on the granting of new wildlife interaction zone licences until such time as the task force has reported its findings back to the Government within nine months. All those in favour please say Aye, those against No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Private Member's Motion No. 4/2020-2023, as amended, passed.

The Speaker: The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Madam Speaker, you recognise the lateness of the hour. I only ask for a little recess, okay? A little five minute recess?

The Speaker: Members we will suspend for five minutes.

Proceedings suspended at 8:43pm

Proceedings resumed at 8:48pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed. The Honourable Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christopher S. Saunders, Deputy Premier: Yes, Madam Speaker, thank you. Just a bit of house-keeping.

Madam Speaker, we recognise the lateness of the hour and realise that despite the challenges, we have ended today on a positive note. We do recognise that this is the festive season and although we had wanted to start Parliament early tomorrow and would have finished extremely early, recognising that the Parliament staff have their Christmas function tomorrow, the Members think it best for us to adjourn the House until 10am on Monday.

With that said, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10am on Monday.

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, before you put the Motion, hitherto, ever since I have been in this House, Thursdays were set aside solely for Private Members' business, unless Government had an emergency and had to deal with something. The whole of Thursday would be taken by Private Members' motions and Private Members' questions and if we finished, then Government business came afterwards.

I think the business committee needs to look at that situation because when we put on, you know, ten, twelve reports (and important reports they are) they do take much time. It is something that I would like to see: get back to Thursdays being fully to deal with Private Members' business and then, whenever that is finished, to deal with any Government business.

ADJOURNMENT

The Speaker: I thank the Member for those comments. Those members on the Business Committee who are present can take note of the Member from West Bay West's suggestions or concerns.

The question is that this House do now adjourn until 10am on Monday, the 12th of December. All those in favour please say Aye, those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it. This honourable House stands adjourned until 10am on Monday, 12th of December

At 8.51pm the House adjourned until Monday, 12th December, 2022.