



CAYMAN ISLANDS LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

***THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET ADDRESS
TOGETHER WITH GOVERNMENT'S
STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT***

SECOND MEETING OF THE 2017/2018 SESSION
Third Sitting

Thursday
2 November, 2017
(Pages 1-57)

Disclaimer: The electronic version of the *Official Hansard Report* is for informational purposes only.
The printed version remains the official record.

PRESENT WERE:

Hon W McKeever Bush, OBE, JP, MLA
Speaker of the Cayman Islands Legislative Assembly

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA	<i>The Premier</i> , Minister of Human Resources, Immigration and Community Affairs
Hon. Moses I Kirkconnell, JP, MLA	Deputy Premier, Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
Hon. Juliana Y O'Connor-Connolly JP, MLA	Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands
Hon. Dwayne S Seymour, JP, MLA	Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing
Hon. Roy M McTaggart, JP, MLA	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Joseph X Hew, JP, MLA	Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure
Hon. Tara A Rivers, JP, MLA	Minister of Financial Services and Home Affairs

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Gloria M. McField-Nixon	<i>Acting Deputy Governor</i> , Responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W Bulgin, QC, JP	Attorney-General, Responsible for Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Hon. Bernie A. Bush, MLA	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> - Elected Member for West Bay North
Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks, JP, MLA	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Mr. David C. Wight, MLA	Elected Member for George Town West
Mrs. Barbara E. Connolly, MLA	Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr., MLA	Elected Member for Prospect

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, MLA	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> - Elected Member for North Side
Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr., MLA	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> - Elected Member for Newlands
Mr. Anthony S. Eden, OBE, MLA	Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. V. Arden McLean, JP, MLA	Elected Member for East End
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MLA	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, MLA	Elected Member for George Town Central

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
THRONE SPEECH AND BUDGET ADDRESS
TOGETHER WITH GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGIC POLICY STATEMENT
SECOND MEETING OF THE 2017/2018 SESSION
THURSDAY
2 NOVEMBER 2017
10:30 AM
Third Sitting**

[Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Speaker presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition will say prayers.

PRAYERS

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr., Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for Newlands: 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 Legislative Assembly now assembled, that all things may be ordered upon the best and surest foundations for the glory of Thy Name and for the safety, honour and welfare of the people of these Islands.

Bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II; Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Charles, Prince of Wales; and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands, the Premier, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the Opposition, Ministers of the Cabinet, ex-officio Members and Members of the Legislative Assembly, 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.

The House is now resumed.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: There are none.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, Elected Member for George Town Central: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for George Town Central.

RAISING OF A SECURITY MATTER

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: I wanted to highlight a security matter that I brought to your attention last night hoping that it would be resolved today, in respect of the gate being open and unable to close. By all means, I don't think we are in a state in our country where security is that big of a risk for us but, basically, the gate is open and anyone from the public can walk into the back.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, I am sure the Serjeant-at-Arms heard that like everybody else has by now, and will attend to it as soon as possible.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

TOURISM ATTRACTION BOARD FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 30 JUNE 2013

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy Premier is speaking at an event this morning and in his ab-

sence, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Financial Statements for the Tourism Attraction Board of the Cayman Islands for the Year ended 30th June 2013.

The Speaker: So ordered.

TOURISM ATTRACTION BOARD FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, 30TH JUNE 2014

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Financial Statements of the Tourism Attraction Board for the Year ended 30th June 2014.

The Speaker: So ordered.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: There are no statements.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

OBITUARY AND OTHER CEREMONIAL SPEECHES

The Speaker: There are none.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGES

The Speaker: There are none.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READING

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017

[Continuation of Debate on the Budget Address and the Throne Speech together with the Government Policy Statement]

The Speaker: Continuation of debate.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Elected Member for Newlands.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr., Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for Newlands: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my debate on the Government's Budget, Policy Statement and Throne Speech. I would like to begin by congratulating the PPM-led Government on being able to produce a budget that, as per the Premier's comments in the Policy Statement, represents the policies and priorities of the Coalition Government for the next two years.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the difficulty the Government must have faced in bringing together so many ideas from so many different individuals who were all not from one party. As a matter of fact, we now have Government representatives from two parties that represented, I think, one of the biggest political rivalries this country has ever seen, in addition to a number of independents. Hence, I can appreciate, Mr. Speaker, how difficult an exercise it must have been to actually pull different priorities and policies from everybody's Manifestos and put them together in one concise plan, so, again, I congratulate the Government for doing it.

The Premier said in the Policy Statement, Mr. Speaker, that this Government continues to work on the foundation that was laid by the previous PPM administration, and that is quite clear by the number of Capital Projects and so forth that I see the Government embarking on or continuing in this current term.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier mentioned being nostalgic about this new Government's first budget, a budget put together by his coalition partners. I am also feeling a bit nostalgic today, being this is the first time, I think, that we have had an Opposition that is so well organised and working together as a team to provide a response to the Government's position.

I would like to genuinely thank my Leader, the Leader of the Opposition and Member for North Side, for the leadership role he has played in bringing all of this together on this side of the House and in providing direction, leadership and organisation to our group. I think he is to be congratulated for his efforts in advancing our democracy. It is quite evident how seriously he takes his role, in the way he leads this group and the respect he has for our democracy, so I want to thank him and the other Members of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, including the Independent Member for George Town Central, who all play integral roles in what happens on this side of the House.

I am also feeling nostalgic today, Mr. Speaker, because two months will mark the second anniversary of my departure from the Progressives, and while I do miss some of my colleagues on the other side and some who have now departed, I do take note that many, many, people in this country and in this honourable House predicted that would be the end of me, politically, and that I would lose the people's mandate and not be returned to this House. Despite the odds, Mr. Speaker, with God's blessing and the help of the

people of Newlands, I am blessed and honoured to be back here to continue serving my people.

Mr. Speaker, I took careful note of your comments to this honourable House yesterday, when you basically laid out the Code of Conduct you expect from Members on both sides, and I wish to assure you that showing respect for others has never been an issue for me. I only hope and pray that the respect I give will be returned; and I hope that all Members paid close attention to your words, Sir so I wish to assure you that I fully intend to comply with your instructions and with your wishes, and will do my best to follow them, and Mr. Speaker I want to say now that if on occasion I slip, it is not intentional. I am still learning and I am certain that you will correct me if necessary. With all due respect, Sir, thank you, because I do have the utmost respect for the Chair, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to talk about comments that have been made to some of us on this side, and they may have been made by way of constructive criticism or advice, but some have said to us that we should not be so critical of the Government if we want to get things done. I am taking that message to mean that we must try to work together, but with all due respect to the Chair, Mr. Speaker, and all Members here, I sincerely hope that no honourable Member of this House expects that, while being respectful and following the Rules of the House, I plan to give this Government a pass or a bly.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to do my job. I will do it respectfully, but my work will get done. I owe nobody on the Government side anything, and I hope there are no assumptions that I do, so you do not have to like me—and I know there may be some who don't like me; but you do have to respect that the people of Newlands put me here to represent them and I am going to represent them to the best of my ability. I do not have to be nice to anyone and they don't have to be nice to me, but let us not mistake that for how this Member needs to get things done for his constituency.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, you supported me politically, and for that I can only say thank you. I don't believe you have expectations of anything else from me, other than a heartfelt thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Sir?

The Speaker: Only that you behave yourself.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: I think I touched on the behaviour part a little earlier in my opening remarks, but Mr. Speaker, no one is going to determine my political future but me. I am not going to bow to intimidation or threats. I will not be censored, and I will speak on behalf of the people of Newlands, as long as I have breath in my body.

Mr. Speaker, like the Member for Bodden Town West, I have faced many tough situations in my life including being airlifted and uncertain whether or not I would survive, and being told by doctors here that there was nothing more they could do for me. I went to university in Chicago, Illinois, and I oftentimes survived in neighbourhoods that were so gang-infested and controlled by crime, that I often wondered if I would get out alive. I have been beaten by members of the Chicago Police and had a pistol stuck in my face, but I survived all those hardships because I believe there was a purpose for me to survive, and I am here.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier sent his biggest and baddest to Newlands and Central, to take care of me and the Member for Central.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: I do not believe he came himself; he may have once or twice but, Mr. Speaker, David defeated Goliath. I will not go into great detail this morning on the tactics used to try to eliminate me, but I remember those lessons. With the support of colleagues on this side of this House, I survived, so, for the time being, I am here and I will work with anyone who wants to work with me, but let us not confuse my niceness and cooperation for weakness.

Mr. Speaker, last term, with the support of colleagues on this side of this honourable House, we stopped one of the most powerful lobby groups in this country in stopping the passage of the Legal Practitioners' Bill. To lighten the moment, Mr. Speaker, I often like to quote from one of my favourite movies, "*Young Guns*". It is a little quote I always use that says: "*See, if you got three or four good pals, why, then you got yourself a tribe, and there ain't nothing stronger than that.*"

This is, Mr. Speaker, the Government's first Budget and, as I remarked earlier, I understand how difficult it may have been for the Government to pull this together, and I began by congratulating them.

There is another reason I am feeling nostalgic today. In doing my research and digging through numerous papers I have at home, I came across a document that you may remember, Mr. Speaker. Just after the election, we were all meeting to see if we could form a government, and an agreement was presented to me, entitled "*Agreement for a Unity Government for the Cayman Islands*". Mr. Speaker, I think this came from individuals in your Party.

What is different about this one is that it has signatures on it. It was signed by Members who at the time were sitting with me and your good self, Sir, and members of your Party, so it seems that despite the contention that the Members on this side are not worthy of leading this country, there was a time when we all sat together discussing forming a Government of

National Unity. I will not discuss what happened after, but we had gone as far as signing this document.

I take note that what was presented to me at the time of discussions were options for forming a government and what was communicated to us was that the offer presently on the table to the CDP [Cayman Democratic Party] from the Independents was unacceptable, which was, at that time, I believe, when the Member for East End was slated to become Premier. The second option presented was that two or more Independents could possibly defect to the PPM to form the Government, which would consign the rest of us to the Opposition benches. Another option was that the Independents would attract two or three PPM—

The Speaker: Honourable Member, can you tell me where you are going with this, because none of it is contained in the Throne Speech nor the Budget and it has not been referred to by any Member and unless you are going to make some cogent point that I am not yet seeing, I don't think you should continue in that vein.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The point I was making is that in his statement, the Premier made reference to the country voting for the Government on the other side. I was simply pointing out that when we were discussing it, the formation of what now exists on that side of the House was referred to in this document as the *nuclear* and *least* appealing option at the time.

The Speaker: You have sufficiently covered it in answering that, if that is what you were doing. I think you should move on.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With your permission, I would like to lay this on the Table for—

The Speaker: I would like to see it first, though.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Sure.

The Speaker: Before any document is Tabled, as Speaker and Presiding Officer, I would prefer to see it.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable Members, the Presiding Officer has the right to call for any paper before it is laid on the Table of this honourable House. If that was not so, all kinds of things could be brought into this House and dumped on the Table.

[Pause]

The Speaker: That one is not signed...

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Only one of these documents I signed and I recognise my initials on it. The other one has nobody's signature on it, and could be put together by anybody to say anything; I will not allow this one to be Tabled.

The one called "Agreement for a Unity Government of the Cayman Islands" certainly. It is public knowledge. This other one is not public knowledge and I do not even recall seeing it, but it does have various names to it.

You may continue.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will move on now. Time does move on, as the Premier has rightly stated in his statement.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Time marches on.

Mr. Speaker, just a housekeeping matter as well, in reference to your ruling yesterday, and I am not defying your ruling, Sir, but just to explain why we chose to call ourselves a "Shadow Government".

The Speaker: Honourable Member, we have passed the stage for that. If you or anyone on the Opposition side so wants the public and this House to understand it, then you can bring a Substantive Motion to do so; there is room for that, but there is no room for that in the debate on the Throne Speech nor the Budget that has been laid before us. Please continue on the debate on that.

Member for George Town Central, do you have a Point of Order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: And the Point of Order is?

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: For an explanation of what is the scope of the debate, because based on the past three—

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town, that is not a Point of Order, but I will tell you.

The scope of debate is what the Order of the Day says. The Order and Business Paper for today says: "The Appropriation (Financial Years 2018 and 2019) Bill, 2017 – Continuation of debate on the Budget Address and the Throne Speech together with the Government's Policy Statement". That is what is up for debate. It is what the Member for Newlands is debating, and I would suggest that he continue with the debate on those two items.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a little difficult for me because I have been accustomed to using the terminology, so please, I beg your forgiveness if I slip and say “Shadow” at any point during this debate.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for Newlands, you know very well, because you have been here long enough, and I have been here longer than you, that there are times you slip, but this is one slip that can’t continue. You already made this point publicly, but it cannot be made in this Assembly because there is no such provision. I think you understand that and you are trying to drive it home but you cannot, because I know differently, so let us agree that you are going to continue in the good way that you started, but don’t bring in these extraneous matters that do not exist and have no room, no law, nor rule.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will also refrain from using the term “Councillor” as it is also not a provision in the Constitution, Sir.

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End: Absolutely!

The Speaker: It is in law, though.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Which law?

The Speaker: Yes, it is.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Which law?

The Speaker: You would not understand.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I know I wouldn’t but [INAUDIBLE]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Continuing with my debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Yes.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: I have been tasked with responsibilities in relation to this budget, to speak to certain areas that are currently the responsibility of the Honourable Premier, in particular Human Resources, Immigration and Community Services. Mr. Speaker, I will keep my comments focused on the budget in these areas and later on I will try to fit in some of my constituency concerns and a general overview or position from myself if time permits, but just to assure the listening public that I fully intend to focus on constituency issues during Finance Committee.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Human Resources, Immigration and Community Affairs, the Government’s plans are to allocate budget for spending in the following areas: enhanced policing, en-

hanced work permit system, improved border control, and services for the elderly, disabled, seamen, veterans and indigents. This spending plan I think rightfully highlights areas that are critical to this country and where attention is severely needed. I don’t think anyone would argue with that, because many of these areas we have heard Members campaign on, talked about in the media. The public at large voiced concern in these areas, so I have no argument with the Government on choosing those priorities.

Mr. Speaker, crime continues to be a major concern for these Islands and the number of armed robberies would seem to be an almost daily occurrence now, continuously, and I know that the Government and the police are trying to make efforts to get that under control. In particular, I am concerned about our young people because some of them are becoming victims of violent crimes, but some are also becoming the perpetrators. I will expand on this later on, but it is a major concern for us and the reason so many of us on this side talk about education, both technical and vocational training, social programmes, attention to drug abuse and so forth among our young people as key concerns that need to be addressed, not in the long term, Mr. Speaker, but immediately.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, it is the Government’s responsibility to prioritise resources and policy to address the root cause of any threat to our economic and social stability. I note that in the Premier’s statement he talks about economic and social stability, but I have to really question, after having listened to that statement, read it, and perused this budget, whether or not this budget is going to deliver on the promises, for stability, empathy, and prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, when drilling into human resources, I am pleased to see that one of the major promises being made is the creation of a human resources department and I think all Members on this side support that development. Some Members of this House will remember that last term I brought Private Member’s Motion No. 1/2016-17 entitled “Mandatory Job Registration”, asking the Government to consider making it mandatory for every vacancy in this country to be registered with the NWDA. The Government accepted that Motion, as it was in line with their Policy at the time; now I am hearing about the introduction of a National Jobs’ Clearing House, which I think will encompass most of the suggestions I made in that Motion.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at the budget, I note the majority of the cash is being committed to funding for policy advice to the Honourable Premier. While I understand that there will be a necessary component for advice and consulting in order to get this done, I have to question whether there are resources enough in this budget for the training and retraining of personnel involved and the development of information systems which will undoubtedly be needed; perhaps the

biggest component will be the reengineering of existing processes, work, and information flows.

Most people with a business background or even a technical background will understand what that means, Mr. Speaker, because clearly, you can't simply move functions from one area to the next without looking at how those functions are interrelated, what information is needed for those functions to work properly and how the flow of work fits between them. I see this as an attempt to dismantle the sort of siloed approach we have suffered from for quite some time, and it is encouraging.

When I was with the Government I played a small-but-involved role in some of this ground work and it is pleasing to me to see that it is now being delivered, but I have concerns that there are going to be some impediments to getting this done, given the budget outline. However, I know when the honourable Member responds he may give some more clarity or those details may come out in Finance Committee but on the surface, based on what I have seen, I am concerned that there may not be sufficient resources. What I fear, Mr. Speaker, is that in two years' time we have many consultancy reports and plans and the inability to implement them, because I think two years is too long for Caymanians to get some relief in this area of employment.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier says I should have stayed and made it happen. Well, I can assist them from this side. This is something that is important to the country; it is a national concern. I did complain when I was with the Government, but I was also frustrated at the lack of attention that was being paid to these matters at the time, so I am glad to see it now, Mr. Speaker, and as I said, I am supporting the things that the Government brings that I think are good for this country. My comments are constructive. I am not trying to tear down anything that the honourable Member is trying to do in this area.

Mr. Speaker, cheap labour, as referred to by my colleague for Bodden Town West, continues to plague this country and it continues to threaten not just the future prosperity but the very existence of our middle class Caymanians. We would be smart in being mindful of the fact that, looking at what is happening in the United States, immigration has dramatically increased the size of that nation's low-income population. Many immigrants in the United States will make significant progress the longer they live in that country, but even with that progress, Mr. Speaker (and I am talking about economic progress for them), immigrants who have been in the United States for twenty years or more are still more likely to be living in poverty; lack adequate health insurance, and access the welfare system much more than native-born Americans.

I think we need to be mindful of the experiences of other countries in this area, which allowed the influx of cheap labour to continue, Mr. Speaker.

We know why it happens; let us not sugar coat anything— profit! It is attractive to a business owner to bring in someone who is going to work longer hours because they have no family commitments here and will accept lower pay because of the exchange between our currency and their home currency, and they will agree to come here and suffer for a time — and I will talk more about how that gain shows up in their home countries.

Mr. Speaker, even with equity investments of \$6.5 million in 2018, \$7.6 million in 2019 being split between the police, immigration, border control, coast guard, human resources, I am concerned that these initiatives are going to suffer from underfunding and under-resourcing and will suffer implementation delays. I am basing that on my past experience as a project manager, and hopefully it will be taken in a constructive manner.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of immigration, I also think there are some items missing from the Government's plans. In the 2013 to 2017 term, the Progressives Government produced or was producing a Labour Relations Bill; however, that Bill has not seen the light of day. In my opinion, having had the benefit of being involved in some of the earlier discussions on that Bill, I was in support of it. I believed it would have addressed many of the lingering labour issues that have been revealed through public consultation, stakeholder input, and our constituents. I think now would be an appropriate time for the Government to consider re-introducing that Bill, in tandem with the creation of a Human Resources Department.

Mr. Speaker, this country needs labour reform. We need to improve in that area, and anyone who listens to their constituents on a regular basis will know what I am talking about. I am not just talking about those people who may have an axe to grind or a chip on their shoulder; I am talking about people who are being discriminated against; pushed out of organisations. The Government is introducing a radical new approach to dealing with labour in this country and I think it is time to, in tandem, evolve our labour market and modernise it.

In implementing these changes, the Government is going to have to deal with a raft of older legislation changes and amendments, and some may be difficult to fit into the existing legislation, simply because those older pieces of legislation have been amended so many times, but I think the creation of a new Human Resource Department is a fresh new start and hand in hand with that, should come a new Labour Law.

Mr. Speaker, I feel we would be missing the boat in many areas if we do not take advantage of the opportunity to do this now. That new Labour Relations Bill was supposed to address concerns in the areas of unfair dismissal, constructive dismissal, termination for failure to perform duties in a satisfactory manner, redundancy, and termination monitoring. We all have

heard the redundancy stories, and how at times it is almost impossible to determine if the redundancy was really a redundancy or a convenient excuse to get rid of someone. I have had too many people come to me and complain about their experiences, for me to dismiss what happened to them as sour grapes. Caymanians have been made redundant unlawfully in this country.

The new Labour Relations Bill was supposed to address concerns in the area of initiation of proceedings for unfair dismissal, remedies for unfair dismissal and victimisation. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the Government can find the resources necessary to pick this up once again and push it forward, and they will have my support in doing so.

Earlier, I started to talk about cheap labour in this country. I think the consequences and concerns of us being so free in allowing cheap labour into this country have now been well documented. The influx of cheap labour, Mr. Speaker, whereby we import poverty into this country is playing a significant role in the erosion of our social and economic condition. I really do not see, in the budget, where the Government has given this any priority, but I can tell you without fear of contradiction, that our appetite and addiction for cheap labour has caused wages to reduce right down to a minimum wage—which I support because at least it provided a floor, or the wages would probably have gone lower. We see it in job ads where the qualifications for the job in no way, shape, or form match the salary being paid. Overnight, many jobs became minimum wage jobs when the minimum wage requirement was passed, but it was a good thing that we at least implemented a floor.

Mr. Speaker, Caymanians are disadvantaged by the cheap labour we are allowing into this country—and you know, I am not blaming the labourers themselves; I am blaming some of those businesses who, in the pursuit of profit (and they have every right to earn a profit), but when you neglect your own people to do so, I think that is where the Government needs to take a more active role. Most Caymanians will not and cannot live in substandard housing. We cannot work excessive hours voluntarily because we have families here, we have children to raise, and we most certainly are not able to pool resources with six or eight other people who are sharing the same living accommodations as us.

[Desk thumping by a Member]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Mr. Speaker, cheap labourers will voluntarily endure being exploited because the conditions in the country where they originate are much worse. The economic benefit when they receive their salary here in US or CI dollars, is mind-boggling. In the Philippines you can build a decent—and when I say decent, I mean a middle-class, 3-bedroom house—from foundation to roof for US\$20,000, so

you can imagine what four, five years in this country does for the average cheap labourer. The benefits they receive here last a lifetime when they return home.

Again, I am not blaming them, Mr. Speaker. If I were in that economic condition, I would be looking for opportunities too. I feel for some of them, when I see the level of exploitation they go through. The way they are treated, you would not treat your dog, but it happens here for the sake of profit and greed. I may be chastised by many for being “anti-business” but their business is their business. My business is to make sure this country does not continue a regime that allows the exploitation of cheap labourers. It not only ruins our reputation but it can ruin lives. We see the effect on our middle class.

Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing the talk about foreclosures. Mr. Speaker, when this country went through the recession many businesses downsized or made redundancies or went to their employees and said we have to reduce your salaries. Many Caymanians who at the time either lost their jobs or had to take lower pay, or found lower paying jobs, had mortgages. The monthly payments on those mortgages were calculated at a much higher salary than they are now making, so is it any surprise that so many of us are going into foreclosure? In some instances, people were able to refinance with the bank, but in many others, Caymanians were not able to yet the bank expected them to continue to maintain the same level of debt servicing as when they entered into that mortgage.

We hear the cry for legislation protecting individuals when they fall into default on their mortgages. I think it is badly needed and this is the time to bring it. The Premier talks about me leaving his Government; this is one of the things I asked for, Mr. Speaker, and the response I got from the then Minister of Financial Services was “*people need to manage their money better.*” I know many decent, hard-working Caymanians who were insulted by that comment; they have no money to manage.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot just continue importing poverty into this country, exploiting foreign workers and allowing cheap labour to reduce wages in this country. Everyone on this side supports business as well as development, but we do not support exploitation and we *certainly* do not support the erosion of our middle-class into poverty.

On the area of Immigration, I find it shocking in the budget that the Government anticipates revenues from work permits, PR, Caymanian Status, and the like to amount to some \$209 million across 2018 and 2019. In this category, Mr. Speaker, revenue for 2015-16 was \$62 million and in 2019 it jumped to \$72 million. Based on the Government's promise that there would be no tax increases in this country, I also have to make the assumption, and I think it is reasonable, that the only way this revenue is going to in-

crease is if we increase the number of work permits, Cayman Status and PR Grants.

I also support the notion, Mr. Speaker, that in this country, it is now time for us to strongly consider granting Caymanian Status only through descent or marriage. I know this flies in the face of what many consultants like to preach—that we need to increase our tax base; allow more people to come here because we are consumption-tax driven and the more people here spending money, the better it will be for us. Look at the projected jobs that will be created over the next two years. They are fewer than the number of work permits we are going to be granting.

I am sure someone on the other side will explain to me that I got this wrong, but if you are creating fewer jobs than you are bringing in work permits, some Caymanians will have to go home.

[Desk thumping by a Member]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Who are we catering to, Mr. Speaker? Who does this budget cater to? I do not see the importance being placed on the average middle-class and lower income Caymanian. The majority of my constituents in Newlands, Mr. Speaker, are middle-class Caymanians. Hard working, middle-class Caymanians who want nothing more than the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families, educate their children and not have to deal with government policy where it is going to make it difficult for their children to get jobs and for them to potentially lose their jobs and their homes, and it is happening.

I have seen middle-class Caymanians, Mr. Speaker, whom I looked up to and respected when I was growing up in this country, and always thought of them as doing well for themselves. Where are some of them now, Mr. Speaker? They are coming to me in fear of losing their homes, with no hopes of educating their children beyond High School, and no hope for the future, and that is *not* something I wish to be a part of, Mr. Speaker.

This budget needs to do more for the average middle-class Caymanian family. I have been preaching it now for over four years and I sound like a stuck record, but I am going to keep preaching it until somebody finally listens to me. My major concern, Mr. Speaker, is employment for the hundreds of young Caymanians we turn out to our job market every year from our High Schools; 20% may go on to University, 80% are out there looking for jobs and they cannot find them, Mr. Speaker. They come to me, at my office, and tell me, “I have applied for 20, 30 jobs, and not one call back.” They have applied to the Government for jobs, and they are qualified for these jobs, and they do not even get the courtesy of a reply e-mail to say “you were chosen”—or not. They are asking me to call someone at this department or that one for them, just to find out if there is any chance they are going to be interviewed.

We saw in the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker, what has been happening at the HSA, our own Government Hospital. I am not here to bash civil servants, but I have to speak the truth. We can no longer continue being politicians who are afraid to speak on behalf of our people. If I messed up, I don't think anyone would have any hesitation in pointing their finger at me and telling me so. It would be all over the press, everywhere, so I am not willing to cover up when I see something wrong happening in this country, and I don't care where it is happening; right is right and wrong is wrong and I live by that.

Mr. Speaker, we have to find a way to reduce government's reliance on work permit revenues to fund these operations but, unfortunately, what I am seeing here seems as if the easy way out is to focus your policies on increasing that consumption – that tax base; I guess because Caymanians are not having children fast enough, they are not growing up fast enough, we are importing bodies. That may look good on a balance sheet, but it is not looking for our people. We are doing it at the expense of our own people.

Mr. Speaker, I will talk a little about education shortly, but this policy of budgeting for an increase in work permits, despite what I have heard the Honourable Premier say, that the more work permits we have, the more opportunities for Caymanians, that correlation would work if Caymanians were getting the opportunities, but they are not. The only ones benefiting are the businesses and the imported workers.

In case there is any doubt that the exploitation of cheap labourers is happening here, I am going to give you a little example; something that was brought to my attention recently. It is being investigated, so I will be careful how I talk about it, Mr. Speaker, but I am talking in very general terms. There is now *documented* evidence that locally licenced companies, Cayman Islands licenced companies, are engaged in the practise of extorting wages from cheap labourers for whom they act as agents to bring into this country.

Some of these people owe money back home because you know, Mr. Speaker, in most underdeveloped countries the banking system is not as advanced as ours; somebody needs a loan they go to a loan shark. These people owe money; their families may owe, their uncle may owe, and they are brought here on a temporary work permit and farmed out to some business and part of the requirement is that they pay back the debt they or their family owe back home, from their wages.

In another scenario, they are being contacted to come here, pay their airfare, pay a finder's fee of about US\$5,000 to the agent, come here on a temporary work permit, and when they get here the job has fallen through, but they now have three months to go find another one and they show up at our local businesses *begging*. Why are they begging? They have nothing to their name here. They are penniless and desperate and these are *locally licenced companies*,

with a Trade and Business [licence] from the Cayman Islands Government, doing this to people, and we continue to turn a blind eye to it. I may be arguing on behalf of the imported labourers now, Mr. Speaker, and none of them can vote for me, but it is wrong and wrong is wrong.

I can't really blame the Immigration Department, because I know, in speaking to them I know that their hands are full, but we have imported a condition of lawlessness in this country that has to stop. It is degrading our standard of living. We cannot continue to allow businesses to just do this kind of thing unchecked, and then brag about the increase in the number of business licences we issue, when some of them are licenced thieves and criminals.

Mr. Speaker, this practise can only be described as evil and all of us in this honourable House need to take a stand against it. These foreign influences are using this country to profit, and they are destroying our reputation and our standard of living. I don't need to tell you how many illegal business operations are going on here; people who are not even licenced, who somehow get here and decide to set up shop doing something that they don't have a Trade and Business Licence to do. I know that the authorities are trying to crack down but unless a collective position is put out there, that this Government is not going to tolerate it any longer, and I know that many of us are soft-hearted and caring people and we don't want to stop a man from making a dollar, but think about the effect of that on your own people.

Mr. Speaker, how effective and practical is the current Immigration Law? The Immigration Law, in my opinion, was set up the way it was because at the time, we needed to import people here to work. We needed people to come here and help us build. I have seen over time where the strong protections for Caymanians have been watered down and there have been a number of amendments to the Immigration Law; and I think that, if the Government is going to take a radical approach to reforming labour and the processing of work permits, it is also time we have a look at the Immigration Law and decide if it is still fit for purpose.

Do we need new legislation? Do we need to repeal and replace the current Immigration Law? Mr. Speaker, in my mind, I am starting to form the position that it is not fit for the needs of this current time. I know there have been issues with individuals who are employed by the immigration department, which falls under that Law and is enabled by that Law, who may misinterpret the intent of the Law. I would not say it is a mass problem, but there are incidents where people have argued and had differing opinions on whether the Law meant one thing or another.

I think we need a clear, concise, from the people, Immigration Law to take us forward and in the midst of all this reform [is the] perfect time for the Government to do it; and again, you will have my sup-

port in doing it but this has to be done after careful consultation with the primary stakeholders in this country – Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, persons are gaming our immigration system. I don't know if anyone in this honourable House is aware that there are individuals here who have two work permits — one in the Cayman Islands and one elsewhere; and what they are doing is undermining us because they can accept an accounts position for less money than we could. Why, because they have income coming from another jurisdiction, they come here and underbid us when they apply for the job, so to speak. The organisation they are working for moves them back and forth between the Cayman Islands and another jurisdiction and they make up the difference there, so they are making more money than us but as far as we are concerned, they are doing the job cheaper than we would.

There are people, Mr. Speaker, who apply for permanent residence here, knowing full well they do not qualify for it, but they are using that as a means to stay here longer. Their goal is not to become a permanent resident but to stay here and continue working [and] because there is a backlog of applications, it takes time to process so they get to stay until a decision is made. That has to change. We either need to speed up the processing or we need to stop them from being able to stay here indefinitely, especially when their application looks as if there is no chance in the world that they will get permanent residence. They are gaming the system.

Mr. Speaker, looking at the revenues in work permits from 2013 through 2017, they increased from \$47 million in 2013 to \$72 million in 2017, an increase of 53 per cent under the Progressives Government. The Premier says that this means more jobs and opportunities for Caymanians. Have the working and living conditions for Caymanians increased correspondingly in that time period? No.

Mr. Speaker, I will touch briefly on the high cost of dealing with irregular immigrants because it falls under this area. I do agree with the Deputy Governor on this issue, as he and I have discussed the difficulties of this, and we must provide a humanitarian approach to dealing with refugees, but I really have to at least make the suggestion that we try to re-engage the Cuban authorities as often as possible, because they should be bearing some of this cost. While we are the Caymanian people who are friendly, inviting, and caring, we are also spending \$2.2 million a year dealing with refugees, which takes away from our ability to do things for our people.

Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you have 57 minutes left.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to pace myself because I do have much information written down; a number of points, and I want to try to cover as many as possible.

Mr. Speaker, another area that I am very concerned about and again, in doing this, I may be calling out certain people, but it is only in the hopes that things will improve. The Immigration Regulation Schedule in 3(h) recognises a provision, Mr. Speaker, where scholarships by businesses can be part of an agreement to approve a Business Staffing Plan, but I am concerned that not much attention is being paid to these scholarship obligations because once that plan is approved, it becomes an obligation by the business.

Mr. Speaker, I submitted an FOI [Freedom of Information] request recently, asking for information on how many of these scholarships have been agreed to. How many have been dealt with? How many have been given to Caymanians? The initial response was “we need thirty days to get back to you”, and I know that they might just simply be a resourcing issue, but I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that somebody would have that information to hand, because someone needs to be monitoring it. When they are renewing their business staffing plan, someone needs to be able to say to these businesses, *Why haven't you given scholarships to Caymanians? You are not getting another approval until you do.*

In the same vein, Mr. Speaker, I know of two Caymanians who are away at university who received assistance through the good graces of one of my constituents who actually can afford to do so; they received assistance *from him* just to cover groceries. We have Caymanians trying to better themselves, who are going away for tertiary education who can't afford it and yet, we don't know how much money sits in those Business Staffing Plans that could be given to the Scholarship Secretariat to give to our young people to help them.

Mr. Speaker, \$20,000 a year, we all know, doesn't cut it for a scholarship. When I went to DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois, and I graduated in 1994, Mr. Speaker, my fees were close to \$60,000 a year, so I can only imagine... I know people try and struggle with their children and they borrow, but we shouldn't have to mortgage our children's education; it pays huge dividends. I know there is some provision in here for increases and I will wait for Finance Committee to say exactly how much. I know we reduced the amount so that we could help more people; I understand that as well, but I think the priority on scholarships needs to increase tremendously.

I know it is an added cost, but let us take that money from somewhere else. You are investing in your people, in your future, which pays huge dividends. We will not see it this term; none of us will be able to go out and campaign and say we created ten new Caymanian millionaires who are now employing fifty Caymanians a piece, but the future will smile

fondly on us for doing it. That is why we are here, the future.

I know things have changed. I have young Caymanians coming to me, telling me they have applied for scholarships and so on. One is now trying to find work within the prison system, I guess, as an apprentice. He wants to become... I think a clinical psychologist. He wants to come back and help our prisoners and is having difficulty finding employment just to get some practical hours that will apply towards his Master's — he has a Bachelor's Degree already — but is not having much luck; he just wants to work somewhere as a junior counsellor or something. No help!

He cannot return to university because he can't afford it right now, and he wants to work to save some money toward doing so. I mean, that is ambition. He is a young Caymanian who is taking his future into his hands and what are we doing to help him? I am personally calling around and e-mailing people begging them to please give him a chance, but sometimes that hurts them, because the politician calling feels like I am strong-arming a business into hiring a Caymanian. I should not have to do that.

[Desk thumping by a Member]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: They should be embracing our young people. Calling us for names.

Mr. Speaker, we are creating a Coast Guard; L-o-o-o-n-g awaited Coast Guard and again, I support this. I know how the drugs and guns get into this country. It is not on Cayman Airways. Might get one or two; they get caught seems like, but those canoes are coming in. I think they may even have shipping schedules now because (and I will be careful how I say this), there are people in my district and not necessarily Newlands, who could make comments about whether a boat is coming or not and when to expect it. Therefore, it seems like we have set up an underground shipping network that operates on a regular basis and may even be more reliable than the public transport system we have here, and contraband is coming and going.

However, again, Mr. Speaker, I do not see much support in this budget for the proper establishment of a Coast Guard. I do not see how all the equity injections being spread across all these areas of radical change that the Premier talks about, which I agree with radical change, is going to be enough to get all of this done. It comes down to priorities, Mr. Speaker: \$6.5 million for 2018, \$7.6 million for 2019; I do not think it is going to cut it. It is difficult to see, Mr. Speaker, how this is going to be enough to create both a coast guard and a human resources department, with all the reengineering that will have to be done. The outline business case for the Jobs Clearing House alone, Mr. Speaker, calls for \$159,000 from Capital and a further \$423,000 from recurrent. That is

a lot of money for one component of a reengineering project that will affect multiple departments.

I am under no illusion, Mr. Speaker; this is going to be an expensive undertaking, and my advice to the Honourable Premier is that he really look at the resources available for him to get this done, because I do not want to stand here in two years and have to comment about his failure to get it done. I would prefer to get up and congratulate him and support him for doing it, so a careful look needs to be given to the scope of these projects and the resourcing that will be provided.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to a suggestion I am going to make—and it is something I raised when I was with the Progressives. On the surface it might sound like one of those pie-in-the-sky dreams, but it worked for us in the past. There is enough evidence that it worked then; and in a modified and re-introduced way, it could work now.

Mr. Speaker, all of us come from a fishing heritage. Our forefathers and those who came before us survived on the sea. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea designates an exclusive economic zone to these Islands, which is some 119 square miles or so beyond the coastline of this country. This zone is to be used exclusively by the Cayman Islands, and some of the things that are covered in this Agreement are the exploration, exploitation, conservation, protection and management of the natural resources within that zone.

I do not see any mention of this in the Government's plans, but I know I raised it a number of years ago as an area we could potentially develop to benefit our people. While we are looking at plans to develop a Coast Guard, because you will need an element of enforcement and protection if you move forward with what I am about to suggest. Let us ensure that we take into consideration what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, because I think we are depriving ourselves of an opportunity to preserve and reintroduce a traditional industry and way of life and to expand upon it.

Mr. Speaker, we could provide opportunities for Caymanians to become licenced operators within the zone, creating jobs. No one knows more about fishing than our people. There is more than enough expertise here. This zone is now being exploited by countries around us. The irony is, Mr. Speaker, they bring the seafood here which was taken from our economic zone that we should be protecting and when it gets here, the quality is degraded because oftentimes it has been at sea for a number of days, and sell it to us with no control over the price.

We could very easily create a market here where our licenced fishermen can go out, catch seafood, bring it back, and sell it at market price. The Government could simply add a small tax to cover its cost of regulating this market and then get involved with distributors to distribute it to purchasers.

What we have now at sea is the wild, wild, west. The prices are not set according to any market; it is "*whatever I want to sell my fish for today*," and that is why you see such a difference in prices of seafood depending on where you go to eat, nor is there any quality control. By doing this, the Government would be introducing a new, (or reviving) industry which so many of us descend from, and I think, Mr. Speaker, it is out of the box thinking with benefits for Caymanians. We need to start looking at diversifying our economy. We cannot rely primarily on financial services and tourism; there needs to be some diversification. As our population grows, as our strengths grow, we are going to need to provide other forms of employment for our people. There is no shame in being a professional fisherman or woman. We all came from that heritage.

Mr. Speaker, there are added benefits to this proposal:

- we would protect and preserve that Economic Zone;
- we would licence Caymanians to operate in it and supply seafood to these three islands and maybe beyond;
- we would create regulations and pricing and quality standards;
- we would boost our conservation efforts by having a further reach beyond our shores; and
- we would be preserving a Caymanian tradition.

This is just a suggestion I am making to the Government. They can take it or leave it, but at the time of implementing a Coast Guard, I think it is a smart thing to consider.

Mr. Speaker, turning to Community Affairs: I am disappointed in this area and this is where I stop being so complimentary, because in this area I do not see much foresight and planning to improve services to our people. One of the most critical areas in government is providing services for our most vulnerable—the indigent, the young and elderly, and this budget is woefully lacking in this area. Despite claims in the Strategic Policy Statement that it is getting priority, I don't see it in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, this country is projected by the Government to make a surplus of \$141 million over the next two years, but what I am seeing in this budget is that the needs of our elderly and at-risk youth, in particular, are not being met, and we are pursuing other priorities at their expense. The Policy Statement, Mr. Speaker, talks about "Stability, Empathy, and Prosperity – A Plan for Sustainable Social and Economic Development". I see some economic development there, Mr. Speaker, but I do not see much social development, and I am disappointed. It is hard to find the empathy.

Mr. Speaker, when one considers the increased spending on the police, which I support, and

the prison, it is quite clear where we are heading. Community Affairs is tasked with:

- providing for the well-being of at-risk youth;
- maintenance of public shelters;
- public education and social issues;
- residential care for the disabled and children;
- social inclusion;
- housing for indigents;
- support of older persons;
- the Boys Home and the Girls Home;
- care of children on remand or committed;
- school lunches;
- NCVO children services;
- foster care;
- community social programmes;
- accommodations for those in need;
- burial assistance for the indigent; and
- support for battered women and children.

Yet, I don't see any significant increase in services for any of those categories. There are increases, but they are meagre. The total increase from the 2016-17 budget is a measly 0.9 per cent — unless my math is bad, but I did it twice. 0.9 per cent, not even 1 per cent; and the increase from 2018 to 2019 would be approximately 7 per cent, but Mr. Speaker, we are increasing spending on the prison by 122 per cent. The budget for the prison would be more than half the budget for community services.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's Policy seems to be to ensure that we have the capacity for the impending social breakdown of this country. That is what I am seeing in this priority plan, and not much attention is being paid to the root cause of what is putting our people in Northward Prison. I understand there are human rights and overcrowding concerns in the prison. I know we cannot have so many people packed in, confined in one place, without an eventual eruption.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Honourable Members, we are going to take the lunch break until 1:15 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:15 pm

Proceedings resumed at 1:28 pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed.
Please be seated.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL
YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017**
[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: The Deputy Leader of the Opposition continuing his debate.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we took the break, I was moving into concerns with community services and making the point that, in line with what I understand to be the Government's plan to provide prosperity and empathy for our people, I did not think enough was being done in this area.

When I delved into some of the details in the budget document, and in looking at some of the line items, there were things that jumped out to me as major concerns, if we are to be serious about the assistance we are offering to those who are in need — Mr. Speaker, could you give me an indication of how much time I have left, so I can pace myself?

The Speaker: The Member has 35 minutes left.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, I meant to check that before I started.

Looking at the Administration of Community Assistance Programmes to divert youth-at-risk from progressive involvement with the juvenile justice system and to look after the well-being of children in their own homes, this item is being increased by \$157,000 approximately, but I note that the number of social assistance assessments is increasing from 1,484 to 2,390. This is a 60 per cent increase in assessments which, doing the math could potentially be adding human resources to that area but, in my mind, it does not seem like resources are being allocated to fit with this 60 per cent increase in assessments, and I take the increase to mean that the demand for that service has increased and we are not just budgeting for a 60 per cent increase for the sake of budgeting.

This allocation also calls for the provision of adequately prepared shelters and properly trained shelter management staff, Mr. Speaker. I have talked about it in this honourable House before. Bodden Town alone only has three shelters and none of them are rated above Category 3. I think the Government would agree, Mr. Speaker, that the existing shelters are inadequate in terms of their capacity and what they can be used for. I think next to the district of West Bay, Bodden Town has the lowest shelter space available.

In recent times, while we were keeping an eye on some very destructive hurricanes which were passing through our area, I began to worry because, if there was a need to evacuate people to shelters, we really have nowhere in Bodden Town that could accommodate the majority of those that would need to be evacuated from low-lying areas.

Mr. Speaker, we do have the Church of God building, which is unfinished. I recall getting a commitment during the last Finance Committee from former Minister Tibbetts that he would re-engage with them to see what could be done to complete that building, and it still is not complete. I don't see anything in this budget that is earmarked for the completion of that building, but I have to make the case

again, Mr. Speaker, that Bodden Town needs shelter space and that building is multi-purpose. It is not just a church hall; it can be used as a community centre. Later on, if time permits, I will talk about the value of these community centres with respect to our young people and the issues they face, so I can't really see, Mr. Speaker, how \$157,000 is going to cut it, especially given the importance of this particular line item.

Public Education on Social Issues is being increased by \$33,575. This line item is supposed to assist in enhancing public awareness of social issues.

Supervision and Support of Children is another critical area, Mr. Speaker. This is intended to provide a safe place for abused and/or neglected children; assist with the placement of children in foster homes, and pave the way for people to adopt children and so forth, and it is being increased by \$443,248, which is a sizeable amount; however, the anticipated increase in services in this area is 30 per cent. Again, this highlights my concern for the young people in our communities who are depending on us, and not just the young people, but those in dire need in some cases.

Community Development Services is supposed to allow us to build community capacity and promote social inclusion and improve the well-being of vulnerable children. Again, an increase of \$127,428, but the level of services is forecast to increase by 30 per cent. I think we are setting ourselves up for failure by not properly resourcing these very valued services.

Children and Youth Services, Mr. Speaker, which covers children being placed in residential care by the courts; children placed by the courts in secure accommodation orders; children who have been remanded or committed by the court on youth rehabilitation orders, and we are increasing these by \$233,333. The number of at-risk youth in this country is increasing, Mr. Speaker, and I have spent the time to talk to individuals who are employed in this area by the Government and they are concerned that we are not recognising the significant needs in this area.

General Programmes and Children Services, Mr. Speaker, which includes provision of NCVO children service programmes, is getting an increase of what looks like \$820.00.

Foster Care for Children: the number of children in foster care is increasing, but there is no increase in the budget, which remains at \$225,000. Again, we are trying to do more with less. I applaud the Government if they are able to achieve this, but given the significance of this services, Mr. Speaker, I am doubtful that we are going to make the positive impact and strides that we set out to accomplish.

Community Programmes: this includes community programmes, preparation of meals, and after-school activities. There is no increase and we know the number of children who could be positively affected by improving this service.

Rental Accommodations for Persons in Need: provision of rental accommodations for persons in urgent need. There is no change in the allocation from the previous year, but the number of families that we are going to attempt to provide this service to is increasing from 266 to 400. I worry that we will run out of funding to provide this service.

Support for Battered Women and Children: I feel this is one of the areas of biggest concern and it is also the biggest disappointment when considering the number of cases being reported of child abuse. Rape, neglect, assault—all of which are being perpetrated against our young people, Mr. Speaker, and the increase in this area is a whopping \$3,412 dollars.

Therapeutic Services for Young Persons: this remains at \$25,000 a year. This is supposed to assist young people who need to develop skills in behaviour modification. I understand some of that may be provided by third parties. Hopefully, there will be some clarification on that, but \$25,000 a year is concerning.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Services Unit is getting an increase of \$24,777, but what concerns me the most about this particular unit is that they continue to be housed in the Bodden Town Civic Centre, in the mould-infested section of the building. I don't understand why any government personnel are still using that structure for office space. When we think about the important work they are doing with our young people, and what they are charged with... I understand they have a colour printer in their office that can't be used because they can't afford toner.

Mr. Speaker, rather than me continuing to simply point these things out, I want to bring some relevance and significance to this debate. While I do not have the full report here with me, I printed sections of the Yolande C. Forde report that the Honourable Attorney General commissioned—and I believe he Tabled in this honourable House. If you would permit me, Sir, I wish to read just some of the most relevant recommendations in this report.

The Speaker: Member, I do not have a copy of that report. It is an old report and I know that I have read through some of it.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you may continue. When reading from any particular page, please state which page.

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The first page would be Page 20, under "**Recommendations**" where she said "**Involvement in wholesome, group-based activities keep youth anchored in conventional thinking and practises which are important "protective" factors against delinquency. Strategies must therefore be devised to get youth who display less than conformist atti-**

tudes and behaviours, involved in positive organizations such as the Scouts, Cadets, Drama Society, the youth arm of service clubs, and other structured activities. Failing to do so leaves them to drift and form alliances with negative groups such as gangs. Rather than exclude troublesome youth because they may tarnish “the good name and reputation” of the particular group, seek specifically to include them.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand there are those who will say that these functions are being performed by private groups; I understand that. There are many groups out there, but I think the Government has a great deal of responsibility in this as well.

On Page 28, under Recommendation 2.5 she said: **“The implication from the above discussion is that churches have a great deal of work to do, perhaps specifically, by reaching out to the most vulnerable people in their congregation. First, as a preventive measure, churches can play a more creative role by helping youth to forge pro-social relationships. Secondly, in terms of secondary prevention, the church can offer guidance and counselling to those who have already displayed delinquent and criminal behaviour.”**

In Recommendation 2.6 it states: **“To expound on the first suggestion, churches must design and develop a range of activities which would tend to keep youngsters interested and involved. It must always be remembered that a 14-year old is not going to cease being an adolescent because he is a Christian. Churches must therefore devise strategies through which the 2 phenomena - adolescence and Christianity - can have a happy co-existence. For example, young people like sports.”**

Again, going back to the lack of these sorts of activities in many of our communities: in Newlands there is really no opportunity for young people to get involved in wholesome activities like sports, because we do not have the community centres and we do not have the facilities. If we want to make any meaningful improvement on the issues facing our young people, we really need to start investing in those areas, Mr. Speaker.

On page 55, Recommendation 3.31: **“First, it is imperative that a well-designed plan of remedial education is developed and firmly pursued in order to ensure that, from an early age, low achievers are given the kind of special and dedicated attention they need and deserve. This recommendation is supported by the 2005 Cayman Islands Report on Education which states that there must be a commitment in our schools to work with *all* students to improve their performance and to overcome obstacles to learning.”**

In Recommendation 3.32: **Secondly, there needs to be a school programme of technical and vocational education. This would most likely include, but not be limited to, the development or**

utilisation of a technical training institute to teach viable income-generating skills. We must allow non-academics to leave the school system with more than just a low self-esteem. Moreover, after the age of compulsory school attendance, it is often at the discretion of the student to explore avenues to continue his education or training. However, it is apparently at this transition stage that many ill-equipped and inadequately educated individuals often enter the ‘wasteland of unemployment’ – out of school and out of work. They lack guidance and direction. This programme should therefore be flexible enough to allow such persons, under some special arrangement, to remain in the system beyond the age of sixteen in order to leave that institution with some proper certification in a vocational or technical field.”

Mr. Speaker, that applies to my arguments on technical and vocational training and education.

[Pause]

Mr. Alva H. Suckoo, Jr.: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I am just rifling through because I want to get to the most substantive arguments.

On page 170, Recommendation 5.39: **“First, a multi-faceted strategy is needed to address the myriad issues discussed above. This approach must be divided into interventions that are preventive and those that are curative.”**

In Recommendation 5.40: **“Undoubtedly, negative family experiences have done a great deal of damage to the psyche of many of the individuals who we now fear as criminals. The interviews held with the inmates prove this. What is evident is that these hurting men, who have masked their pain over the years with tough exteriors, need, and have long needed, appropriate intervention to address the negative effect of experiences that have left them psychologically scarred and criminally pre-disposed. Had there been a different approach during the school years, many issues might have been resolved at that stage by counsellors. Clearly, they were not. These men are now in prison, usually not for the first time, and they are still hurting and still angry, factors which are most likely contributing to problematic behaviour.”**

On page 171, Recommendation 5.41: **“Parents are the primary agents of crime prevention in any society. It is necessary to understand and embrace that concept. Once that is done, one would appreciate the critical importance of supporting parents and the institution for which they are responsible — the family. Parents are potentially the primary agents of crime prevention because they are the primary agents of socialisation—the process through which patterns of behaviour are first learnt. It is also the process**

through which values, norms, and societal mores are passed from one generation to the other. If this process breaks down and the family becomes dysfunctional, then what would be transmitted are anti-values and anti-social, as opposed to pro-social norms, and one could expect problematic behaviours to flow from that household. Everything, therefore, must be done to prevent this from occurring but how, one may ask? The answer is through family support programmes — interventions which aim to strengthen families and improve the quality of child rearing which occurs in the home. The advantage is that such interventions always yield multiple preventive benefits, and in that regard can be viewed as highly cost-effective.”

Recommendation 5.42: **“Family support programming has to be multi-tiered. It must be designed and structured to cover the developmental span from infancy to adolescence and programmes must range from those that are general to those that are highly specialised, which are intended for parents and children under severe stress and where the family is in crisis. Programmes may be categorized as follows...”** She goes on to talk about Universal Services, Neighbourhood Services and Family Preservation.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've read enough to make the point that I am trying to make, which is: if we want to improve the social condition for our people, we need to pay close attention to the threats to the social condition. I don't think that we are spending enough time focusing on that. We spend more time focusing on the economic development of this country and what we can do to improve the economics and the economy, but we are not looking at the underlying social issues that this country faces. While this report is old, it is still relevant; I think it is even more relevant.

I would encourage the Honourable Attorney General to refresh his efforts in this area and produce a new report because it will be interesting to see where we are now. I know he has made efforts to implement some of the recommendations as recently I think, as last term when he brought the Cautions legislation. That was one of the recommendations but there are so many more; so many areas that are untouched and the end result, Mr. Speaker, is that we are failing our young people. We can brag about all the economic development and success we are achieving, but if at the end of the day, we have a society of young people who are feeling displaced, forgotten, as if they do not belong in our success story, we are going to pay a heavy price for it. We see it already; we are expanding the prison.

We have too many of our young people who are threatened; who feel threatened and because they do not feel that they belong in our society, Mr. Speaker, they are creating their own. They are gravitating towards gangs; they are pulling away from positive,

wholesome activities to go out and rob and kill. If we do not put a stop to this by investing in our young people, in our social programmes, we are going to pay a heavy price.

“Support for Battered Women and Children”, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest disappointments in this budget is that it is being increased by \$3,412.

Mr. Speaker, I think this country and this Government now need to take a very radical and bold approach to dealing with all these issues. For too long in the past we denied the existence of gangs. We are afraid to tackle the issue of cheap labour. We seem afraid to take a strong stand against labour issues, such as discrimination against Caymanians in the work place. In relation to education, we are way behind the curve, in our education efforts. We are the “Jewel of the Caribbean”. We brag about our financial services, we brag about tourism, Mr. Speaker, but we cannot brag our educational institutions. People from all over the world should be coming here to learn from us. We have done so much with tourism and financial services. We should be the educators for the rest of the world, but we have never taken the approach to education that we should have.

Mr. Speaker, I plan to bring a Motion and I will be very brief; I won't go into the motion, but it will ask Government that for every single Caymanian who is on scholarship, offer him or her the opportunity to get a teaching qualification at the end of their degree, so that when they return to this country, if they can't find employment elsewhere, they can teach. We need to make radical changes like that in this country. It is not my idea. It has been done in other countries, but things like that. Think out of the box. Think of creative ways to help our people.

The school system now is begging for resources. It goes without saying; if students coming back home with a degree had a teaching qualification, they could be offered two years in the school system, whatever it takes, before they move on to their careers. If you want to pay back this country for the opportunity given to you, teach our young people. Simple things like that we can do, that will not break the bank, but will help so many.

The deterioration in our family units, the issues faced by single mothers. I know so many single mothers, and I know they made the choice to have the children, but we cannot punish them for it now; the children are here, they are ours. Mr. Speaker, we need to own them and do what we can for them. Eighty per cent of our young people are not progressing beyond high school and they are going into a world where, as the report I just read from stated, in a few years, they are lost. They can't progress, they are being by-passed.

We are not teaching our young people the value of a good, solid education. Many of them do not want to hear it anymore. They have moved into this mentality of “I want it now”. We need to go back to our

traditional values, Mr. Speaker, where there was no shame in a hard day's work.

It is up to us to lead and take on that responsibility. Let us stop being the politicians who fix these problems by handing \$25.00 to somebody and hoping they will go away. I know we all help. We all have to do it because we feel bad for people, but it is unsustainable. As more and more of our people fall into poverty, the handouts are going to have to increase even more. I am not speaking negatively of anyone; any of you honourable Members who do it. I do it from time to time, but it is unsustainable. Let us teach our people to help themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I want to talk about was education, and I know that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has covered this topic extensively. I do not think I even need my notes because I have spent so much time working with the Opposition group, visiting the schools, discussing the issues with education. I have seen the need. I have seen where education has to be our number one priority. We have so many talented young people. We have so many that need just a little more to get to the level I am talking about, where they can help themselves. They do not need us. The only way to get there is to make the investment in our human capital, our people. If we do not do that, nothing is going to change. We are going to keep giving concessions to developers, and they are going to keep building and creating jobs that do not go to our people.

I know efforts have been made. I applaud the Minister of Tourism for what he has done with tourism training. I know there is nursing and there are pockets of technical and vocational, but we are not making it a top priority in this country. We should be the jewel of the Caribbean when it comes to education. It is the only way that what we are building here is going to be sustainable, last forever, and benefit our people. We *must* become leaders in education, not just financial services and tourism - investment in our people.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about this levelling system which we find is not helpful to our young people, especially when they are moving into tertiary education and they are looking at being graded according to percentages. The levelling system, most parents are confused by it.

Special Education Needs (SEN): I am happy to see there is something in the budget for that. I hope it is enough because special education needs are widespread in this country, Mr. Speaker. Every school we visited had a concern about special education needs.

Again, I talked about encouraging more Caymanians into teaching. We were at John Gray the other day, Mr. Speaker, and a young lady came up to me and said: *Could you just promise me one thing?* and I said, *What's that?* She replied, *Try to hire more Caymanian teachers.* I said, *Well, why is that so important to you?* She said: *Look, they identify with us, we trust that they*

are guiding us in the right way, they don't look down on us; they are Caymanians. That is not to say that foreign teachers don't do the same thing, but this young lady [shared] some experiences where she felt she was not her teacher's top priority. She felt like her teacher's top priority was the salary, and that her teacher did not care if she learnt or not.

There can be no down-side in trying to encourage more Caymanians into teaching, and that is why I support the Minister of Education's assertion that she wants to give her teachers a pay raise. They are the most important people in this country. Our children's future is in their hands, Mr. Speaker, so I support it too, and I hope we find the money in this budget to do it.

Don't be afraid of the criticism. Don't be afraid to be bold. It is time for radical change. I know the Curriculum needs to be improved and another recommendation I am offering to the Government is: let us make Information Technology mandatory. It has to be; every job in the future is going to require information technology knowledge, experience and skills. The jobs we are training our young people to do today, Mr. Speaker, do not exist yet; technology is advancing so fast, they are just being thought of. If our young people are not prepared to take advantage of that, they are going to lose out.

My background is in IT and I know its value. Someone asked me the other day whether I would go back into technology when I leave politics and I said *no*; it has advanced so far in the past four years that I would be playing catch up for the rest of my career. It is integral to the development of our students.

We also had comments from students about wanting to learn more about civics, our government, and not to embarrass anyone, Mr. Speaker, but in some of the schools we visited, when we asked students which serving politicians they knew... they were asked who was the Premier, who was the Speaker, who was the Deputy Premier, many of them did not know. It is important that they know who their parents put in charge of looking after them.

Mr. Speaker, when we start to talk about government and what government's real purpose is, you would be amazed at the feedback and the interest that our young people have in politics. I always start off by telling them that politics plays a role in everything they do in life. If they are going fishing, it is about the Conservation Laws; if they are buying a car, there are banking laws. Everything that they do, politics plays a role in, so they cannot go through life ignoring politics and what we are doing. We all encouraged them to come here and observe us and see what we do and to understand what our jobs really *are*. We are legislators; we make the laws that they live by and that's an awesome responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the last area I need to touch on is that I am glad to see that West Bay will be getting a primary school, but I have to make another plea:

please look at Bodden Town. We are overcrowded. Both primary schools are overcrowded. We need the School Hall at Bodden Town Primary finished; Savannah is running out of space. Their facilities need to be improved and eventually we are going to need a third primary school in Bodden Town. I am making that plea on behalf of the entire district, not just Newlands.

Our young people are our primary focus here and that is why the Opposition went on this mission, Mr. Speaker; not to embarrass anyone, not to make the Government feel like they were not doing it. We wanted to show our students and our constituents that we are putting our money where our mouth is — education is our top priority and will continue to be that. Technical and vocational: let us just get it done; it has been too long that we keep talking about it. I know there are pockets of programmes out there, but let us go full-blown, full speed ahead, and give our young people a proper start in life.

Mr. Speaker, I have come to the end of my contribution; I think I kept it within two hours. I really want to thank all Honourable Members for listening to me. Based on what I have seen, I think they were really listening; all Members of the Government were listening to what I had to say and I hope that, even when I was critical, it was taken as constructive criticism. I am not here just to beat down the Government; I am here in a very responsible role and I take my job very seriously. As I said before, you do not have to like me, but I am speaking on behalf of a constituency and a district, and that is the message that I want you to take with you when I finish here today. Forget about what Al Suckoo did politically, forget about me leaving the Party, forget about who did not win in Newlands and think about my message here today — our children.

Thank you.

[Applause and desk thumping]

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

Honourable Member for Prospect.

Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr., Elected Member for Prospect: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I rise today to deliver my contributions to the 2018-19 Throne Speech, Policy Statement and Budget Address, I have many people I wish to thank, of course, with your indulgence.

First, Mr. Speaker, I give thanks to Almighty God for preserving me and the People of Prospect for electing me. I would bid a good afternoon to the good people of Prospect and the good people of these Cayman Islands who are listening to my voice right now. It is a great honour today to join my colleagues in thanking Her Excellency the Governor for adding to

history her final Throne Speech before this Assembly against the backdrop of my first as a newly elected Member.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud this Government, of which I am a part, for setting its track early on to be guided by and in adherence to core values and principles, rather than petty differences, as demonstrated by the preparation of a budget and Policy Statement which truly reflects a wide participation of views and incorporates a diversified Manifesto of undertakings made to the citizens of these Cayman Islands. I wish to also congratulate and applaud the Premier for a bold and deliberate presentation of this Government's goals for the next two years of this new administration.

Mr. Speaker, I also applaud the Minister of Finance for his presentation of his first budget address, yet again affirming his capability and leadership of this country's Ministry of Finance, a ministry built on sound fiscal principles that will deliver long-term financial stability, stable economic growth, and improved lives for all the citizens of these our beloved Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, there were a number of notable firsts identified by the Premier in his presentation of the Policy Statement but there is yet another, equally important, but not yet broadly mentioned first and that is represented in the composition of this new administration, and although briefly touched on by the Member for Newlands, I wish to expand a bit further. Not only are we a Coalition Government, Mr. Speaker, but we are a government that reflects the full spectrum of political views currently represented in these Cayman Islands, namely, the People's Progressive Movement, the Cayman Democratic Party, and the Independents.

I would humbly submit, Mr. Speaker, that this Government is the definition of democracy in our modern times. Representation 'by the People and for the People' can only be a positive thing. We come together as elected representatives of the people with different backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints, each with an equal chair around the single table working towards a common goal. That is the beauty of the art and science that is Government.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the issue to be addressed today, this Coalition Government of National Unity has presented another ambitious budget, but one that I believe is wholly achievable. This Government has demonstrated a track record for setting positive objectives in its various ministries with each responsible minister working in tandem to ensure the achievement of those objectives together. No half being greater than the whole.

Turning to a more personal aspect of my address, Mr. Speaker, whilst many difficult issues have been laid out, I wish to focus first on how these plans reflect commitments I have made to my constituents, as contained in my Manifesto. Secondly, on the plans that have been so ably laid out for the Ministry of Human Resources, Immigration and Community Affairs,

for which I have the privilege to serve as Councillor and the Ministry, also, that is led by the Honourable Premier. I am fortunate indeed, Mr. Speaker, to find myself apprenticing under such capable leadership.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would first like to address those people I serve: the people of Prospect. I am a man of my word, with the framework set forth in my Manifesto serving as my guiding light since my foray into the political arena. As reflected in the Policy Statement so ably delivered by the Honourable Premier, it is clear to see that many of my Manifesto commitments have been embraced by this Coalition Government of National Unity and put into action, and for that, on behalf of the People of Prospect, I am truly grateful.

First, at the local level, Mr. Speaker, the one issue that was almost as pressing as the unemployment of our people is the alarming increase in crime, and, in particular, burglary and petty theft, both to residential and marine properties. In my Manifesto I committed to an improved, enhanced neighbourhood watch that would empower local residents to work alongside better-equipped front-line police officers to watch over and protect our neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that this Coalition Government has embraced this approach with the development of what the Premier referred to as the community wardens, who will serve to increase the visibility and responsiveness to threats within our communities while also serving as a deterrent to those who would seek to harm Prospect or its people. Ensuring the success of this initiative, Mr. Speaker, the budget presently before the House creates funding for the recruitment of a further seventy-five community police officers over the next three years, which would work towards the further detection and deterrence of crime in our communities. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, funding has been allocated for the long-term prevention of crime by investing in at-risk youth programmes, which support rehabilitation of young offenders, while also preventing homegrown crime through the intervention of positive initiatives in the lives of those young people who are considered at risk.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, my Manifesto committed to revitalising the local Prospect community both in terms of beautification but also enhancement of the existing infrastructure such as roadworks, which included improving safety. Working towards my commitments began with the resurfacing of Mangrove Avenue, one of the most neglected roads in all of Prospect. This work was made possible by the surplus achieved by the previous administration, and I am further grateful to the Minister and Ministry of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure, and the Government, for their agreement to get to work so promptly.

However, Mr. Speaker, their objectives align with mine — to work together to achieve solutions to issues in *all* of our districts, as quickly and cohesively as possible. Additional work in Prospect will include

road works and other neglected roadways, always with safety at the forefront of mind. This important factor will be addressed through the installation of speed bumps in residential areas and enhanced street lighting.

One of the commitments I made to myself upon taking office, Mr. Speaker, and I know this will strike very close to your own heart, is accountability for the district of Prospect, or the constituency of Prospect, rather; sometimes at my own expense and sweat. Because I take that commitment very seriously, I have found myself spending many days cutting grass and pruning trees with my own hands or at my own expense. Now many would argue, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps, I need the exercise — and perhaps I cannot argue with them on that but through that work in the soil of Prospect and through the glasses of lemonade which have been extended to me on breaks, with the beating sun at my back, I realised how seriously I take the responsibility I have to the constituency of Prospect and to the people who call it home. However, Mr. Speaker, grass and trees will always grow back and as such, the work will never be done. For this reason, I consider my work in Prospect a living work which constantly evolves, changes, and develops.

Mr. Speaker, I will shortly be rolling out “Project Prospect”; a living work which I believe is bigger than any one person, but is the essence of community; a collective effort at making the place we all call home better. An important component of Project Prospect is the economic uplift which comes with ensuring the spirit of hard work and community is equally rewarded by available local work going to those small business owners who themselves reside in Prospect and who will join me in Project Prospect to better the community. They themselves live in and reap the rewards of a job well done again, Mr. Speaker, rewarding hard work and economic outflows, [being] part of a formula which makes a better community in Project Prospect.

Mr. Speaker, my Manifesto also committed to more public open space in terms of parks for the community's benefit. In addition to the work already started to re-purpose the derelict homes and properties within Prospect, work has already begun on delivering a large public park that will beautify both Red Bay and Prospect, proving once again the collaborative nature of this new Coalition Government and our willingness to work together. I will leave it to the Premier to outline those specific plans, Mr. Speaker, given that the vision for this exciting concept was, in fact, truly his, very much taking shape under the last administration.

Mr. Speaker, for every small success, more challenges remain; one such is the decades-old issue of flooding in Prospect. The rains of the past week have resulted in major flooding throughout Prospect, highlighting the need for more drainage. The problem

is, Mr. Speaker, that the water table in the area is so high, combined with the fact that much of Prospect represents reclaimed land that in certain areas required significant fill to develop. This serves to compound the problem of adequate drainage. Mr. Speaker, though I fear our solution to the issue at hand would be a costly one, I am confident that together with the experience and teamwork of my colleagues we will develop a solution which both addresses the issue without imposing undue financial stress on our many other important and vital projects.

Another area that still represents a threat, though not exclusively to Prospect, is the ever-present concerns regarding foreclosures.

Mr. Speaker, I know it also strikes deep within your own heart when I say that I feel the weight of responsibility for the 1,200 lives in Prospect that I am responsible for. It burdens my heart, Mr. Speaker, when I find myself helpless to provide assistance to those who are about to lose their homes. Just this week, I sat with one of my constituents and witnessed first-hand what can only be described as reprehensible actions by a local bank that ignored an individual's active attempts to make good on their arrears, despite distressed circumstances, opting instead to list and sell the property, displacing one of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, while the debt has been cleared for the bank, it marks only the beginning for the families that are left helpless and now homeless in its wake. It creates further dependence on the Government to fill those gaps.

Mr. Speaker, on this point I have to agree with my learned colleague, the Member for Bodden Town West, that more needs to be done by this Government to protect Caymanians from foreclosures. We, the Government must actively negotiate with our local banks, who I might add, look to us for the same assistance and concessions as any other local business to afford flexibility and compassion to those Caymanians when they need it the most; especially, Mr. Speaker, when what is held in the balance is the roof over the head of a Caymanian family. I believe it is incumbent on us as the Government to do this.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to now turn to the one item that, for me, may prove to be the only item that more convincing may yet still be required. I am advised to get the difficult matters out of the way early, and everything else after that will be downhill. Well, I guess we shall see if that holds true today.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when my only job was to be critical; however, in my current role, I accept that if I am to be critical, I also have the responsibility to propose an alternative solution. Mr. Speaker, I gave deep consideration including thoughts on this other item, which I believe is worthy of consideration; however, I felt it necessary to maintain my autonomy as an Independent though equal member, I believe, of this Coalition Government to act independently in my address.

As such, Mr. Speaker, let us begin with the difficult one, if not the expected one, and that is the Government's plans as laid out by the Honourable Minister of Tourism regarding the George Town Cruise Berthing Facility. It is no secret that I am still not sold on the idea of pursuing cruise berthing, at least in its present location. My Government knows this, and as such, I am taking no liberties here. However, I do understand the necessity for it, and even the timing, when taken into consideration of the larger context; that being the overarching George Town revitalisation project, which I agree, as a lifetime George Towner, needs to happen. Then, Mr. Speaker, I gain a better understanding as to why the present location may arguably be the best option; however, I would not be true to myself if I simply left it there.

I also have my concerns and those need to be ventilated. First, even with the development of cruise berthing piers in Hog Sty Bay, which, by the way, will change the face of downtown George Town forever, it still will not allow for 365-day usage because it is not situated in a protected harbour. Also, Mr. Speaker, thus far, much of the conversation has focused on how the cost of the initial construction of birthing facilities could be met, but I would point out that not much discussion has been had on what impact the cost of maintaining this facility will be on an annual basis. We also have not discussed the shelf life of this project.

Like all buildings or infrastructure, the piers are not designed to live forever but have an expiration date. I understand the shelf life on this is estimated in the region of 20 to 25 years. At some point in the future, it too will face major refurbishing at what can be expected to be a future extensive cost. In short, Mr. Speaker, I believe our focus in terms of cruise development is too narrow. However, again, that is the critical aspect — what is the alternative?

There exists an alternative, Mr. Speaker, which has recently been brought to my attention, that provides infrastructure, that in my opinion is forward-looking and one that plans for the next 100 years, instead of the next 25 years. One that touches on a much broader aspect of the Cayman economy than merely cruise tourism. By now, we have no doubt read about the Eastern Cargo Port option that has been offered, which proposes creating a deep water protected harbour that could accommodate cargo vessels as well as larger, Oasis-class cruise ships which cannot now be anchored in George Town or off of Spotts dock. I believe this opportunity deserves a closer look, and have no doubt, once the questions have been appropriately answered, that my Coalition Government will give it such closer look.

However, I believe that with a protected harbour not only can we take advantage of cruise berthing, but we can also explore the option of creating home porting. This would mean cruise ships that service the Cayman Islands could use the Cayman Islands as a hub to access the wider Caribbean, as well

as Central and South America. The economic uplift alone created from this opportunity warrants a further look, but it would not end there, Mr. Speaker. Home porting would also increase our airlift capacity. As such, we can expect a substantial increase in air arrivals and stay-over visitors and the infrastructure needed to support this industry. Further, the increased imports that would be needed to service these vessels in terms of food stock would also introduce much-needed new revenue to government coffers in the form of duties that would be collected from this cargo.

Mr. Speaker, I also admit that I was not sold on an idea first proposed under your tenure as this country's first Premier, that being mega yachting. However, that was before I was given the opportunity by the current administration to better appreciate the value of this important industry to the Cayman Islands by way of the Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands. On a recent visit to Monaco, I was afforded the opportunity to see first-hand why the Cayman Islands is the global leader in mega yacht registrations.

The Red Ensign Group - a division of The Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands accounts for 80 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of the global mega yacht industry; however, the Cayman Islands offer no local amenities for an industry in which we currently rank number 1 in the world. In addition to mega yachting, cruise berthing to include home porting, there is also the potential for expanded cargo operations that may include transshipment as well as the potential relocation of our fuel storage tanks, as well as the construction of a new highway connecting from Prospect to the eastern districts. The spin-off economic benefits to the local community for local truckers, engineers, and so forth suggests, to me anyway, that further discussion is warranted, and I remain hopeful that it can be included in the Government's Agenda going forward.

Mr. Speaker, turning my attention now to the Ministry of Human Resources, Immigration and Community Affairs for the upcoming two years, let me say that the learned Minister, the Honourable Premier, has my full support and, as his Councillor, I look forward to seeing the objectives he has set reach their full potential. The primary objective of this Government is to achieve sustainable social and economic development, which will only be achieved through the development of sensible policies and legislation relating to law enforcement; border security; work-force development and labour compliance; employment of Caymanians and identifying, addressing and preventing social issues in our country.

Through these policies, the Ministry will contribute to National Security, economic prosperity and the well-being of the community through effective immigration controls, policing, delivering on work-force readiness programmes and enforcement of workplace safety and employment standards. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, through the subject area of community affairs, the Ministry will endeavour to assist and em-

power persons in need and enhance the well-being of the vulnerable. Focus will be placed on enhancing operations and ensuring that services are delivered more effectively and efficiently. While this is no small task, Mr. Speaker, with the support of everyone, both the private and public sectors, I believe the Ministry can carry out this responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, focusing first on the goals of the Ministry of Human Resources and Immigration, these goals include achieving full employment for all Caymanians through the creation of a human resources department which will better enable the Government to improve planning, and the strategy and monitoring of the overall work force of our country, including better management of the work permit regime. The Ministry recognises the need for a more holistic and collaborative approach in addressing the issues surrounding unemployment, as well as under-employment, among Caymanians.

We are all aware that unemployment is a very emotive issue in the Cayman Islands and has a tendency to obscure the fact that causes of unemployment vary and may therefore require different policy responses. As such, the Ministry's budget has been developed to facilitate a more holistic approach ensuring that Caymanians are better prepared and protected, to ensure they are able to actively engage and participate in the economic opportunities that exist in the local labour market.

Mr. Speaker, social investments in Caymanians are embedded in our strategies, as well as our policy decisions, and I can attest that human capital development is a priority for this Government. We are cognisant that there are Caymanians who experience challenges in securing and retaining employment. These particular cases can be extremely complex and require a degree of compassion and the careful balance of additional training and, in some instances, instilling confidence in those citizens to be able to effectively help themselves. For this reason, a multi-agency approach is often considered the most effective for ensuring long-term results.

Mr. Speaker, with a multi-agency approach, all service providers are committed to providing an optimal service to our clients, to maximise their potential for change. As such, the Ministry now has responsibility for key agencies, which work to address the barriers to employment and have a unique opportunity to develop local labour capacity to meet current and future work-force requirements and address the obstacles to employment faced by many Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry's agencies and departments are interconnected and therefore have to capitalise on opportunities to achieve greater outcomes. The Ministry's agencies, namely the National Work Force Development Agency, hereafter referred to as the NWDA; the Department of Children and Family Services, hereafter referred to as the DCFS; and the Needs Assessment Unit, hereafter referred to

as the NAU, will address the needs of unemployed persons through a holistic and strategic approach. Through the collaborative efforts of these agencies, the Ministry *will have the capacity* to engage unemployed Caymanians by better coordinating services such as child care, counselling and family services, mental health support, and the provision of financial services.

As the NAU and DCFS work to address the social barriers to unemployment, Mr. Speaker, the NWDA will also support the work readiness of Caymanians through skills assessments and development of a range of education training and development opportunities, thereby aligning Caymanians actively seeking employment with the needs of the employers. During this upcoming two-year budget period, the NWDA has a range of training and development initiatives with the aim of enabling Caymanians to build skills and increase their opportunities to secure employment in the local workforce.

Mr Speaker, it cannot be overstated that the supply of labour is a key and challenging component in the pursuit of economic stability, prosperity, and progress for this country. Historically, the Cayman Islands labour market has been dependent on a level of migration. This dependency is evidenced by the Islands' diverse international and multi-cultural population, which helps to fuel the economic engine that is our labour market.

Mr. Speaker, this did not start yesterday; expectedly, the unprecedented economic growth enjoyed by these Islands has led to a significant increase in a number of work permit grants. The goal now is to ensure that we not only continue to sustain labour-market expansion, but also leverage a dynamic mix of strategic incentives, work force management solutions, and enforcement to improve immigration, labour and employment services, in order to create opportunities for Caymanians to more ably compete and advance within our world-class workforce.

Mr. Speaker, one element of the Government's approach, therefore, is to create meaningful recognition and rewards for those employers delivering a fair and equitable employment experience for Caymanians. In addition to managing a National Jobs Clearing House, the new department will also manage an Employer Accreditation Programme, which would be geared toward holding business owners accountable and rewarding best practises, advancing opportunities for Caymanians in the work force and preventing employment-related abuse of all employees. The goal, therefore, Mr. Speaker, is to encourage fair and equitable treatment of all Caymanians as a key element of our top employers' corporate culture and business staffing plans.

In reality, Mr. Speaker, we can appreciate that a wide range of factors exist, which affect the balance of power within employment relationships. Such factors may therefore be expected to either increase or

reduce the likelihood that Caymanian employees will be adversely treated in the workplace. As such, Mr. Speaker, we will not only implement programmes and strategies to create work force opportunities for Caymanians, but also ensure capacity and capability is available within the resources of the National Human Resources Department, to strategically monitor, analyse, anticipate and manage the labour needs of our country. Our vision is to support the process of building effective work force capability among Caymanians in conjunction with delivering an efficient, fair and transparent work permit and permanent residency regime that does not disenfranchise Caymanians in our pursuit of employment opportunities or career advancement.

Mr. Speaker, as you would expect, the process of establishing the National Human Resources Department will involve an intense degree of change, the magnitude of which is captured more so in the desired strategic outcomes, as opposed to the project deliverables. Those strategic outcomes include:

1. Increased grant of employee rights, protections, and priorities for Caymanians in accordance with relevant laws.
2. Reduction in the likelihood that Caymanian employees will be adversely treated in the workplace.
3. Reduction in the likelihood that employers will exploit work permit holders in favour of employing and developing Caymanian employees.
4. Provision of value-added services and benefits for employers that demonstrate specific practises aimed at ensuring fair and equitable treatment for Caymanian employees.
5. Increase talent development opportunities for Caymanian employees, including scholarships, mentorships, apprenticeships, and continuing professional education.
6. Increase visibility by the competent authorities into workplace practises and employers' compliance with statutory obligations; and
7. Greater efficiencies in the business process related to immigration, labour, and work force development services through modernisation of technology, legislation, and corporate culture.

We have recognised, Mr. Speaker, and indeed, have accepted that the modernisation of immigration, labour and employment services will require multi-level transformation, beginning with the recruitment of an interim director to assume responsibility for the National Human Resources Department. The interim director will be responsible for managing the

complex change process that will span legislation, policy, governance, business processes, technology, operational roles and responsibilities, talent management and organisational culture.

In his recent budget address, Mr. Speaker, the Premier clarified that the establishment of the National Human Resources Department will not merely be an exercise of merging functional aspects of the NWDA and the Department of Immigration. In essence, the establishment of this new Department represents a paradigm shift. This paradigm shift will kick off with a change in organisational leadership, coupled with an aggressive plan that calls for the modernisation of strategies, services, and business processes.

Mr. Speaker, the sustained growth of Cayman's labour market and maturation of its key industries demands *now* more than ever that public service delivery models are customer centric, responsive, efficient and driven by leaders that utilise innovative strategies to meet our customers' priorities. For this reason, the National Human Resource Department is being designed to leverage the benefits of integration between public sector agencies as well as the efficiencies of automation, e-services, and information exchange solutions.

The reality of the public sector today, Mr. Speaker, is that it is assessed by the efficiency of its service delivery. Gone are the days when the effectiveness of the public sector was measured solely by the revenue it generated or the employment it created. Driven largely by a generational shift in the jurisdiction's dominance as an off-shore financial centre and the financial service industry that comes with it, there is wide-scale demand for more effective, efficient, and convenient public services from the public sector. These are expectations that transcend nationality, economic status, occupation, and the different methods of funding, managing, and delivering these services.

Mr. Speaker, on this basis, I am confident that the National Human Resources Department will redefine immigration, labour, and employment services, strengthen customer focus, and build integrated service delivery models. The public deserves us to be at the centre of every decision, from strategy formulation and design through to execution. This ambitious change programme, therefore, will entail significant business process re-engineering to implement improved value-for-money processes that will reduce waste and duplication, whilst producing an effective customer journey.

Mr. Speaker, history dictates that on its own, change in the policy and regulatory framework will not achieve the desired results intended for the National Human Resources Department. We are also keenly aware that there is growing risk that employees are not trained in the skills and supported in developing the fundamental competencies that they need in order to respond to changing circumstances. For this rea-

son, Mr. Speaker, the new department is being designed with talent management in mind and with the realisation that capacity building reforms must receive substantial attention in order to facilitate the empowerment of civil servants with the right mix of skills and tools. Our economic engine has and continues to create job opportunities in the hospitality and trades industries. Again, we must all continue to encourage our young, and not so young Caymanians, to take full advantage of the technical, vocational and educational training and Ready2Work programmes to develop and train themselves to proudly take on these meaningful and necessary careers.

Mr. Speaker, as we look to the tangible future benefits from the funds and in this Appropriation, it is important for this Honourable House to also pause and recognise some of our accomplishments. While we continue to provide resources to find meaningful and long-term employment opportunities for our Caymanians, we must also publicly recognise the employers who consistently employ and train Caymanians. This is especially necessary for the small and micro business owners who take on interns and employ Caymanians in significant numbers, often training Caymanians at their own cost and on their own time.

Mr. Speaker, we must also recognise the larger firms within the private sector that build and maintain excellent training programmes for young Caymanians, and continually develop talented young Caymanians and progress them through their careers.

Mr. Speaker, I am also encouraged by our young Caymanians and continue to be impressed by the Passport2Success cohorts; these young people have shown discipline, a spirit of teamwork and cooperation, a willingness to work hard and to continue to develop and advance their skills, knowledge and experience. Expanded Passport2Success and Ready2Work programmes will continue to prepare and develop our young Caymanian workforce for employment, offering a hand up, not a hand out.

One concern I have, though, is that our young men are underrepresented; they are not taking advantage of these programmes as they could be, Mr. Speaker, and are therefore outnumbered by their female counterparts by a significant margin. I therefore appeal to my male colleagues in this hallowed Chambers, fathers, uncles, brothers and other male role models in the community, to make an extra effort to encourage our young men to develop their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, of equal importance are the goals associated with supporting our most vulnerable, for which work has already begun in terms of reorganising the Needs Assessment Unit, which recently was the primary focus of the Public Accounts Committee. It was encouraging to see how the bi-partisan contributions of one Legislative Assembly committee can, in fact, work towards finding the solutions needed on the National Agenda.

Mr. Speaker, reform of public services related to immigration, labour, and employment can only be achieved with the commitment of a highly motivated, flexible, diverse, and skilled civil service work force capable of providing high-quality, personalised public services. Admittedly, I am encouraged by the positive change agent attitude taken by a significant portion of staff I have met thus far. This paradigm shift is an opportunity for us all to be excited, motivated and reinvigorated, Mr. Speaker, because we are certainly poised to support the modernisation of public services to the direct benefit of Caymanians on a scale not likely to have been seen before.

Mr. Speaker, focusing our attention on the Ministry of Community Affairs and its supporting agencies, and the essential and imperative role in identifying, addressing, and preventing social issues in our country. The Ministry of Community Affairs has recently welcomed the new Acting Chief Officer whom I have every confidence in, and work has already begun to introduce meaningful reform. This is evidenced by the Ministry's recently established purpose, which will guide both the Ministry and its departments, namely, to "Empower people, Enhance lives." This over-arching purpose will therefore guide the Ministry's efforts to enhance operations and ensure services are more effective and efficient when carrying out its mandate to assist those in need and enhance the well-being of vulnerable persons.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Newlands said that he could not see in the budget how the Government intends to assist our most vulnerable. Well, if you would allow me to repair that loss by providing some precise information — and it is unfortunate that he is not within these halls to hear it. In support of the Government's broad outcomes for the 2018-2019 budget year, the Ministry of Community Affairs will endeavour to focus on the following key goals:

1. Strengthen child safeguarding services by focusing efforts on prevention and intervention.

Mr. Speaker, with the establishment of the MASH or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Ministry of Community Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), is committed to working with the Royal Cayman Islands Police, Education Department and Health Services to enhance the safety of our children. In addition to upholding high social standards and carrying out effective investigations, the DCFS will focus on prevention and intervention with support from their partner agencies. The Ministry will continue to support the work of the CAYS Foundation for the provision of residential services for children.

Mr. Speaker, it is also imperative that we continue to assess, evaluate and implement changes as necessary to our programmes and services that are related to our children, as they are the future of our

country. Equally important, enhancement to services cannot be accomplished without funding and adequate resources. With this in mind, the Ministry of Community Affairs will be conducting a series of evaluations to ensure services and programmes for at-risk youth and children in need of care and protection are provided at the standard required, and making strategic improvements, where necessary.

2. Provide quality services to older persons and support their rights and unique needs in accordance with newly passed legislation and policy.

Mr. Speaker, the work started under the previous administration to protect our most vulnerable is being continued by this new administration. The Older Persons Law, which was approved in March 2017 and commenced in July 2017, with the establishment of the Council of Older Persons, which is to advise on older persons' issues and well-fare and advocating for enhancing the quality of life of older persons across these three Islands. I am also delighted to see my constituent and friend, Ms. Lucille Seymour, recently appointed as Chairman of this Council; I know she will do a good job.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility not only to establish and implement legislation and procedures, but also to enforce them, as often we are the voice for older persons, children, and persons with disabilities. This is why, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Community Affairs and the DCFS, will continue to review and enhance its residential and community-based services for older persons both in Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac. For 2018, the Ministry will support a new Public/Private sector initiative, the "Adopt a Home Program".

Our Older Persons Month in October of each year will also continue to be organised and facilitated by the Ministry and DCFS; however, initiatives will be developed to support ongoing activities throughout the year to keep our older persons active and involved, extend appreciation to them for more than only one month, and establish relationships and activities between our elderly and our young children, which research shows are educational and beneficial to both the old and the young.

In addition to the services provided by the Department of Children and Family Services, the Ministry will continue to provide support and funding to The Pines Retirement Home for the invaluable service that they continue to provide to our older persons.

3. Support and empower families in need through the provision of human services. Due to the numerous social issues that we are now facing as a country, assistance in various forms is necessary, be it temporary or permanent financial assistance, inter-

vention, or empowerment towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Mr. Speaker, work has already begun to reorganise and enhance the services provided by the NAU; as such, it is important that we allow some time to pass in order to see this work come to fruition. As they say, "Rome was not built in a day" and these problems did not develop over the course of a day, but certainly over a much longer period. I am happy to report that the permanent financial assistance backlog has now been reduced from 311 applications to 42, and efforts are being made to ensure that these circumstances are not repeated. Necessary steps are also being taken to conduct reassessments in a timely manner, to best address changing circumstances.

I am also very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we are able to increase the support that is extended to our Seamen and Veterans, who played a critical role in the development of our country. This will result in an increase from \$550 per month to \$650 per month in 2018 and then increase a further \$100 to \$750 per month in 2019. The increase is also applicable to persons receiving personal financial assistance.

In addition to services provided by the DCFS and the NAU, Mr. Speaker, the Meals on Wheels programme expanded its services to numerous families and older persons in our community. Again, this is an example of the importance of partisanship and positive working relationships within our community. Efforts will be made by the Ministry to continue to support this important cause.

Mr. Speaker, apart from monetary support and provision of basic supplies to families, we are fortunate to be able to contribute to a vital service provided by the Cayman Islands Crisis Centre, which provides and promotes safety and empowerment to numerous women, children and families. Again, I believe the Member for Newlands made reference that not enough was being done in this direction, but I humbly submit just the opposite. As a result, we continue to extend our appreciation and support, as much as possible to this agency, for the essential services which they provide.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the DCFS, the NCVO's Nadine Andreas Residential Foster Home, and the numerous foster parents for their contributions to the community and interventions they provide in the best interest of our children and families.

4. We will review policies and advocate for gender equality through gender mainstreaming. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Community Affairs will continue to advocate for services and support legislation towards gender equality and mainstreaming.

Mr. Speaker, we have fantastic programmes which are truly making a difference, and whilst not

attached to the Ministry for which I am responsible, I commend the Ministry of Education on its strategic partnership with "100 Women in Finance", which produced "Girl Force 100", which has taken 75 young Caymanian girls between the ages of 13 and 18 years old from each John Gray High School, Clifton Hunter High School, and CIFEC [Cayman Islands Further Education Centre] and not only exposed them to a spectrum of new careers which these young women probably never would have known existed, but is also teaching them, one by one, to have the confidence and skills to be self-sufficient and succeed in this world. My understanding is that there are plans to expand the programme to include Layman E. Scott High School in Cayman Brac in 2018, and I applaud these efforts, Mr. Speaker.

5. Restructure organisational resources in a strategic way to ensure services are efficient and effective.

Mr. Speaker, efforts are already underway for Ministry and Departmental resources and services to be strategically aligned and restructured. Staffing would be utilised creatively to enhance services and meet the needs of the clientele in a timely, effective, and efficient manner. To ensure consistency, best use of resources, and promote staff development effective from the first of November 2017, human resource staff have been redeployed to the Ministry, allowing for the HR to be centralised. This means that the HR team now consists of four staff who will review existing practise as necessary, provide human resource support and guidance to the Ministry and relevant departments, whilst promoting staff development and the ever-so important, succession planning.

Mindful that the budget does not allow for the entire restructuring process to occur all at once, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this honourable House and Members and the public that a recruitment process is now underway to provide the NAU with the support it needs, and will be completed before the end of this calendar year. In addition, Mr. Speaker, a recently revised organisation chart allows the DCFS to move towards having specialised teams which can focus specifically on key clientele. In support of this process, job descriptions will be re-evaluated to ensure role clarity and best fit with intentions to implement this process for the 2018 budget year.

6. Establish a holistic and collaborative approach to services by working across the public and private sectors.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to acknowledge that no one Ministry or agency alone can truly address the social issues and concerns in our country, nor meet the needs of persons and families; however, through a holistic approach and with the commitment of the public and private sector, I believe

we will be able to see many more solutions and accomplish more.

7. Further revise and develop services in the Sister Islands.

Mr. Speaker, all those services to our Sister Islands are on a smaller scale than they are in Grand Cayman; I am pleased that both the NAU and DCFS provide full-time services in Cayman Brac and, as necessary, to Little Cayman. Residential and community-based services are also provided to our older persons; however, in an effort to continue to advance our services, ongoing reviews and monitoring will be conducted to ensure the timely development of services based on need and demand identified in our Sister Islands.

Mr. Speaker, you will also note that there is much work and plans in place by the Ministry of Community Affairs that will begin in 2018 and be carried forward depending on available funding and resources. All efforts will be made to progress in a strategic manner, Mr. Speaker, in order to enhance the services and be in a better position to prepare for future budget processes. I hope this information serves to enlighten the Member for Newlands after his question in terms of he wishes more was being done in community affairs, as well as enlightens the public to the significant work that has already gone into these essential areas and I remind him and them, it has only been five months.

Mr. Speaker, along with the establishment of the National Human Resources Department, which would encompass the administration of work permits, permanent residency and Caymanian status, combined with the reorganisation of the various social welfare programmes, the Government has also been mindful to implement a strategic vision for enhanced border security and immigration.

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, the Cayman Islands is a jurisdiction that is critically dependent on the capacity of border control authorities to facilitate the efficient movement of legitimate passengers via the airports and sea ports. In light of this fact, Mr. Speaker, the Government intends to ensure that border control authorities maintain the capability necessary to detect illegitimate, prohibited, and otherwise potentially dangerous or high-risk travellers who attempt to traverse the Cayman Islands' borders. In our view, Mr. Speaker, it is not merely desirable to strategically bolster our border security framework, but rather critical to do so, as a means of protecting our economic pillars and the country's reputation as a safe, secure and attractive jurisdiction for residency, recreation and business.

In recent years, Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands have facilitated significant volumes of passengers arriving and departing the jurisdiction, both by air and sea. Between January and September of this year, the Cayman Islands received 312,110 air arrival passengers, and I expect this year's totals will ulti-

mately exceed last year's total of 385,451, if I am correct. As evidenced by the ongoing expansion of the Owen Roberts International Airport, supported by the earlier comments made by the Honourable Minister of Tourism, the Government is of the view that strong growth and passenger traffic will be sustained for the foreseeable future. Managing growth and passenger traffic will require not only airport and seaport infrastructure, but also a strategic border security policy by which to facilitate modern, collaborative approaches driven by intelligence sharing and risk-management.

In our view, Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands' border is a national asset holding national security, economic, and strategic value. Advancing the way in which we manage the border, therefore, aims for the seamless movement of legitimate passengers in and out of the Cayman Islands, as a means of supporting trade, travel, and migration.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to realise that the operating environment for our border control authorities is increasingly complex with significant risks associated with many aspects of the business. In this regard, the Government has taken various steps to strengthen relationships with our international partners in the arenas of border control, national security, law enforcement and intelligence, which will allow our border security authorities to better manage this national asset and ensure a comprehensive approach to border security.

Mr. Speaker, we can all appreciate that the world is undergoing security transformations. The scale, scope, and complexity of which are unlike anything humanity has undergone before. In tandem, technologies, intelligence sharing, risk-assessment techniques, have and will continue to revolutionise our approaches to border security. This new global landscape has different and significant implications for the movement of people across all borders, including our own; consequently, this Government will continue to create policies that will enable border control authorities to achieve effective solutions in collaboration with trusted partners at the local, regional, and international levels.

Our goal for strengthening border security is most certainly built upon successful initiatives, and seeks to sustain the balance between facilitating legitimate travel while detecting and preventing the movement of illegitimate travellers and illicit goods into our territory and across our borders. It is pleasing, therefore, to recognise some of the key steps to date in this regard, including:

1. Participation in the development of the CARICOM [Caribbean Community] counter-terrorism regional strategy;
2. Completion of a border security risk assessment in partnership with the UK border force;

3. Partnership with US Customs Border Protection Agency, which will provide the convenience of pre-clearance into Miami airport for passengers travelling directly from Miami to Grand Cayman;
4. The introduction of red and green channels for customs declarations, with plans to further modernise that strategy to manage risk and create a more efficient passenger flow;
5. The introduction of online Customs Declarations for importers and traders;
6. State-of-the-art container scanning technologies to manage risk in relation to imports and exports; and
7. Use of Advanced Passenger Information or API data, which eliminated the need to conduct immigration inspections of passengers departing the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned our advances in cargo security; however, consider, if you will, that cargo is only as secure as the ship, plane, and crew that carries it. A key element of the Government's Border Security Policy involves modernising our API, which involves the capture of a passenger's biographic data and other details by the carrier prior to departure and the transmission of those details by electronic means to the border control authorities in the destination country. For this reason, Mr. Speaker, API has the potential to considerably reduce inconvenience and delay experienced as a result of processing to facilitate either travel, imports, or exports.

While it may not be fully appreciated, it is because of our existing API system that passengers departing Cayman do not need to be inspected by Immigration officials. Our goal is to sophisticatedly manage risks relative to border security and passenger facilitation with respect to arrivals as well as departures, creating increased convenience and safety to the benefit of Caymanians, residents, and visitors alike. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, given that Cayman is not immune from the threat landscape of crime and terrorism, we are committed to building capacity and capability to ensure passengers and crew manifests of carriers will be cross-checked against local, regional and international watch-list and intelligence databases. As a result, we will continue to enhance the toolkit for identifying travellers who pose security threats to our islands.

The modernisation of our API system will help support the goal of modernising our overall border security framework to complement anticipated growth in passenger volumes, manage inherent security risks, and improve the experience for all travellers. In order to effectively meet the dual objectives of facilitating the access of eligible travellers while mitigating security concerns, we intend to ensure that modern facilities, technologies, and systems complement

skills, training, and competencies to enable border security targeting that will identify travellers who present the highest risk. Automated Border Control or ABC solutions including e-gates or kiosks are systems that can facilitate this risk-based approach to border security.

Mr. Speaker, it is also pleasing to convey that as a result of the enhancements with APIS, we will be positioned to implement strategic value-added border control solutions such as automated kiosks and e-gates, which will facilitate efficiencies in the processing of passengers throughout our airport. The protection and security of our border, Mr. Speaker, is not merely an operation conducted at the airports or sea ports and the interior, but also includes the maritime front. In fact, the Cayman Islands is intrinsically connected to, and immensely reliant on the oceans.

Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate, however, that the maritime domain presents a unique set of challenges as well, that have impacted the Joint Marine Unit; challenges that will likely also be encountered by a Coast Guard Service. These challenges are being tackled by countries all over the world, so we are not unique; however, despite being surrounded by the ocean, we may not view it as an interconnected framework of legal structures with diverse uses and frankly, unfettered access. Now, when I say legal structures, I mean established concepts, like the rights of innocent passage, access to ports, force majeure, and so forth. As it relates to diverse uses, there are factors including trade and natural resources, transportation, and recreation.

With regard to unfettered access, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to the fact that while we may be bounded by our oceans, we are actually not protected by them; in fact, the ocean presents the most challenging operating environment, especially in the context of border security, law enforcement, and search and rescue. As part of the Government's commitment to holistically enhancing border security, it is pleasing to note, Mr. Speaker, that a Strategic Maritime Security Management Committee, chaired by the Chief Officer responsible for the Immigration Ministry, will be established to oversee the evolution of the joint Marine Unit into a National Coast Guard Service. We recognise the significant challenges involved in transitioning from a Marine Unit to a Coast Guard and as such, expect that the Committee will provide the higher level, strategic direction necessary to ensure effective and cost-efficient maritime security.

Mr. Speaker, the transition to a Coast Guard service will undoubtedly entail a significant management process spanning, among other aspects, legislation and policy, organisational standards, structures, operations, procurement, recruitment and training. The process of planning through to executing will therefore entail a collaborative effort among local leaders with support from expertise sourced through

the United Kingdom Maritime and Coast Guard Agency.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the establishment of a National Coast Guard Service signals our intention to take a holistic approach to enhancing and sustainably supporting border security. While the fine details are yet to be determined, it is envisioned that the Coast Guard Service will exercise authorities and deploy capability to significantly enhance the safety and security of Cayman's maritime domain, and in doing so will:

- enforce Cayman's various maritime laws and regulations, as well as international treaties and regional agreements;
- guard our coastlines, waterways and ports;
- perform vital life-saving and disaster response missions, including search and rescue operations; and
- defend against security threats including terrorism, illegal migration, and criminal enterprise actors involved in the smuggling of people, weapons, drugs, and illicit goods.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to see that border security is a complex, layered, yet integrated and cross-functional aspect of National Security, which this Government is not prepared to sacrifice. Instead, we intend to ensure that the public will continue to enjoy the virtues of security and public safety, as well as travel and trade.

The Government also intends to work towards the eventual implementation of a coastal defence and surveillance radar system to bolster our intelligence and operational capability. This layer of security framework, Mr. Speaker, will improve vessel tracking, maritime anomaly detection, enhance maritime interception operations, and provide increased security in the protection of our coast lines, waterways, transportation hubs, and critical infrastructure points. As a strategic measure, our goal is to provide our border security authorities with a shore-based maritime monitoring system that will deliver situational awareness functionality required to mitigate the movement of drugs, guns, and other threats to public safety.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, in relation to security and public safety, it is pleasing to note that the Government has also sustained its support for the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. As I mentioned earlier, this includes funding for an additional 75 officers specifically tasked to focus on community policing. I am pleased to see the return of a former Chief Inspector to head that unit. We are already seeing vast improvements and accomplishments under his stellar leadership and, I might add, he is a Caymanian.

Additionally, consistent with the Government's efforts to provide solutions that increase the security and safety of persons living, working and conducting business in these Islands, we have also provided funding for increased tactical resources and infrastruc-

ture. Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that one day we will return to a time where these resources are no longer needed; however, until that time comes, the Government takes very seriously its responsibility to properly equip our security services in order to keep our citizens safe, and I would hope all and sundry within this hallowed Halls would agree with this approach.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate and thank all the Members of this Government and the hard-working civil service for the preparation of this budget through which I believe the country may feel encouraged that the future for all of us remains bright.

On a personal note, I thank the Government for receiving me into its numbers and giving me an opportunity to serve first, the constituents of Prospect and the wider interested citizens of the Cayman Islands in a meaningful capacity, for which I continue to pledge myself to their service and to do the best that I can.

This concludes my contribution to this 2018/2019 Budget, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker and Members, for your time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Honourable Minister of Health.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you for this opportunity to make my contribution to the debate on the budget and Throne Speech. I am humbled and honoured to do so on behalf of the people of Bodden Town East; in our representation form of government, we are merely the mouthpieces of our constituents; sometimes I think some of us forget that.

Let me first acknowledge Almighty God, without whose blessings we would not even be here; even with the cut and thrust of the adversarial Westminster form of politics, we must first acknowledge that these Cayman Islands whom we are all elected to represent, are still one of the best and most blessed places on the face of the earth. Do we have problems? Yes, of course, but our blessings far outweigh them.

Mr. Speaker, I am humbled to be able to make this contribution today and I am wearing two hats; first and foremost, as the MLA for Bodden Town East and secondly, as Minister in the Cabinet of the Coalition for a National Unity in the Portfolio responsible for Health, Environment, Culture and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin my contribution by talking about the key initiatives to improve the quality of lives of the people in Bodden Town East, and some may have taken a different approach, but I think that we must always remember what came first. You can only become a Minister if you become an MLA and, I for one, will stay grounded on that fact — true to my

conviction to offer the best and possible representation for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to say that we have some exciting plans for the continued development of Coe Wood Beach; we are going to construct a proper dock and pier to enhance the boating and sporting functionality of this area. This will augment the launching ramp, and is a logical next step in the development of this facility. I will be announcing the exact details of this in the near future, but the plans have already started. The current Coe Wood Beach has evolved into a more mature and adult-centred place to hang out. I am therefore pleased to announce that the Government of which I am part of has now acquired hundreds of feet of additional beach just west of the existing beach. The additional beach will be family-themed and more kid-oriented than the existing beach. I will work diligently to get kid-friendly equipment and amenities installed to ensure it winds up being the pre-eminent place for children's parties, family picnics and community socials that are themed towards the family. This would not just serve Bodden Town East, but families and children from all over Bodden Town.

Mr. Speaker, there was a mention of the Bodden Town Primary School. There are many exciting things happening in our schools. Despite all that we hear being discussed, we have to be hopeful, Mr. Speaker, and this will be elaborated on more by the Minister of Education. However, as we know, Government is not the be all and end all in the community. To this end, I am working diligently with the PTA of Bodden Town Primary School to provide playground equipment. I received a letter about two months ago and searched and sought sponsorship, and I have raised more than 70 per cent of the funds needed for the Bodden Town School's playground equipment. I must say they are elated about it.

My colleague, the Member for Bodden Town West, and I have taken the Bodden Town Primary School as one of our projects, as it is my alma mater, in addition to Clifton Hunter High School. I will continue to work closely with these two schools, and also lend assistance with Savannah Primary, to see that they get the needed things and don't have the same concerns that they had in the past years about books and pencils and all the other stuff. I work closely with all the other representatives from the Bodden Town area — Bodden Town West, Savannah and Newlands, to ensure that we are responsible enough and not just waiting for government to be all.

Mr. Speaker, I have long believed that schools must serve a critical purpose to their communities, even after three o'clock in the afternoon when the school day officially ends. To this end, I will be working with the PTA and the Principal to enhance the provision of quality after-school programmes and care which are being created right now, and we have already found funding for it. In a world where parents

are increasingly busy with the demands of work, and the extended family homestead approach to living practically non-existent, it is critical to provide a safe place to be for increasing numbers of children until their parents get home from work. The more homework, crafts, sports, science, and reading clubs we can provide once school closes, the better off we will be.

My dream is to have a vibrant school community which keeps children safe and out of trouble and also enhances their learning. With the assistance and direction of the PTA and the Principal, I am confident we can enhance the offerings at the Bodden Town Primary School. For clarity, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to programmes to augment the offering of the school and not another source of stress for the principals and teachers.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to see enhancements to the Haig Bodden Stadium facility. There will be critical upgrades, including new changing rooms, restrooms, and seating stands. I also noticed over the weekend that we need additional deep wells and basketball hoops have already been ordered. Sports in Bodden Town is alive and well and I am proud that Bodden Town East serves as home field for our beloved Bodden Town Football Club, which I served as Vice President once upon a time.

Mr. Speaker, we have the beautiful Meagre Bay Pond up there, just waiting for something to enhance it. We want to move around this district and enhance the community. It would be a delight for residents and visitors alike to build the Meagre Bay Boardwalk that has already been designed, and what a joy and beauty it would be for those bird watchers and for families and vendors, especially, with the new bussed-in tourists that come up to the White House daily; hundreds of people. We can benefit from this and create some more entrepreneurs in Bodden Town.

Mr. Speaker, the Bodden Town Clinic is really one of my projects and something that I campaigned on in terms of trying to expand the services of this growing community. Not only is Bodden Town the largest district, but the largest growing district, with more people coming in every month. I am actively working with the Senior Management Team at the HSA, to ensure that the offering of speciality and doctor visits is in line with the demands of the community, and to increase the hours rather than persons making a mad rush dash through five o'clock traffic to get home and not getting there until five minutes to six. To this end, Mr. Speaker, we will conduct a new assessment of *all* district clinics to ensure we are meeting the health needs of the Islands effectively. I will be instructing a Ministry team to work closely with the Board and the Management of the HSA for this critical initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is only fair to revive the old emergency site at Anton Bodden to maximise our

efforts for the largest and fastest growing district in Cayman. I just had a meeting last week with the Look Out Community and they are excited about it. I am also looking very closely at the ambulance services to ensure we have adequate coverage for the eastern districts. This has long been a vexing issue that has plagued us.

Mr. Speaker, it would be very selfish of me if I didn't mention that over the weekend I went out during the heavy rainfall that we haven't seen for many years, and drove from end to end of Bodden Town East trying to investigate where the most problematic flooding areas were. Bodden Town has had a long history of flooding, mainly in the areas of Monument Road, Cumber Avenue, Belford, Kipling, and areas in Midland Acres. In that regard, I came to the Government in caucus and told them I needed their help, and they were right there for me; that is one of the many reasons I am happy to be a part of this team. They have promised their support and, Mr. Speaker, something I suggested to them was that because our problem is so vast up there, we should consider purchasing a pump or a pump truck just for Bodden Town East; it's that serious.

Another consideration to assist persons to gain access to their homes was giving them material in the much flooded areas, because when I went there I actually used my vehicle to drop people at their homes because the water was so deep they could not walk in it. This is a very serious situation. Some people showed me; I walked to the back of their homes and so forth, trying to assess what the problem was. We could assist them and alleviate some of the flooding if the NRA went there and helped them with some materials in the low-lying areas. I spoke to the NRA and we will do a tour shortly to look at additional drains — I have been made aware that you can drill 50 feet deeper to re-drill some of them to give us better coverage.

Mr. Speaker, these are not new problems; I am trying to do the best I can with the support of the Government to tackle them. Some have suggested all kinds of stuff that could work: pumping stations, culverts, et cetera, but these things cost. I will ask the NRA to do a comprehensive plan and get back to us with the costing, because every day there is a new development and I do agree that because of development around the area, it has caused the natural flow of water to not go into the ponds and so forth where it used to go. This is what development causes: the good and the bad.

Mr. Speaker, I notice we are still printing and ordering books and binders in this honourable House. I am of the opinion that we need to invest in iPads and laptops to alleviate this problem and save the government thousands of dollars. I know it may be painful for some but—

The Speaker: It is.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: We have to start somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I want to provoke the past in showing how it has met the future. It was only in 2007 that you, Mr. Speaker, reached out to me — privately, I must add — as a capable Bodden Towner who, based on your information received from Bodden Towners all over, could contest and win the 2009 General Election. At first, I refused and secondly, I refused. Very few mothers or spouses want any of their loved ones entering politics. I eventually gave in.

Mr. Speaker, the now Honourable Premier, (this is where I talk about the past meeting the future) was looking and listening and not only did he reach out to me but did so publicly; hence I must say the current Premier trumped your effort—

The Speaker: That was several years' difference!

[Laughter]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: —By not fearing his party, or the public, knowing whom he favoured. I consider you my friend and thank you for reaching out to me to serve this country and my community.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, very few gave me a chance to win in May. Yes, this barefoot boy. Very few like me will ever make it here again, Mr. Speaker, and I thank God, as only He could have made it possible to overcome so many obstacles, and Lord knows there were many. I am proud to see how faith has brought my first employer and supervisor, the Member for George Town West; and my first co-worker, the Member for Newlands — at 8 years old, or thereabout, working at By-Rite bagging [groceries]. Oh! How life plays out; it's a small, small world.

Mr. Speaker, I really did not know how many people throughout this beautiful country... the hope they had for me and the prayers that were sent up to protect me; people identify with me as one who understands their problems and has the empathy and humbleness to address them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that some Bodden Town constituents have come to me about the sale of Crown Land. Now, if you know Bodden Towners, when you say the word "land" it is a very serious thing; land *and* sale in the same sentence is a very serious thing so they are not encouraged by any Crown land being sold. I kind of see where the Government was going, in terms of small parcels that the Government could not do anything with, but there are some that mean too much to them and they do not want to give them up. I can publicly say that I do not support the sale of the Crown land in Bodden Town.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is a significant one, as it represents the first two-year budget for the Cayman Islands and the first budget of the new Government of the National Unity. It is also my first budget as Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing.

It is very unique, Mr. Speaker; I have been a Minister twice and only had one budget. Very strange.

I want to thank the Premier for his budget Policy Statement entitled “Stability, Empathy and Prosperity – A Plan for Sustainable Social and Economic Development”. I also want to thank the Minister for Finance and Economic Development for his hard work as well as his Budget Address entitled “An Inducement to Growth”. I start by mentioning these two documents because for this Government and this budget, they not only represent our combined plans for the next two years, but they also indicate the basis on which these budgets were developed.

Mr. Speaker, before I go on, I want to thank the Honourable Minister and former Premier from Cayman Brac... I do not know whether it is West or East.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Cayman Brac East; I am corrected. I want to publicly thank her for all the — I call it counselling and support — she has given me over the years until this day. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I know—

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, if you intend to move on to a new area, there is a meeting that needs to be had so we will take a suspension at this point and hopefully come back by 4:30, at which point we will have to take the motion for suspension of Standing Order. We will suspend the House until 4:30.

Proceedings suspended at 3:55 pm

Proceedings resumed at 4:40 pm

The Speaker: The House resumes its sitting.

Moment of interruption – 4:30 pm
Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

The Speaker: I call on the Premier for the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) to continue the Business of the House beyond the hour of 4:30 pm.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) in order that the business of the House may continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 10(2) be suspended in order for business to continue until 9 o'clock this evening.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL
YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017**
[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Health, continuing.

Minister, you have one hour and 30 minutes left.

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

Mr. Speaker, as it has not been mentioned, I want to make an observation. As young as I am, I believe I am correct in saying that you are creating history by sitting in that very seat today; I don't think that any other Member in this Honourable House has been Leader of Government Business, Premier, Speaker, Minister, MLA and Opposition Leader. I think that deserves an applause.

The Speaker: I do not know that is such a good thing, but I thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker, I know you appreciate, as do many of us in this House, that unless we ensure that we have a growing economy, we will not have the business that generates the revenue that government depends on to provide services to our people.

Revenues earned from financial services, tourism, development and all other sectors help us to fund our health services, education, social security and welfare as well as security services, police, fire, prison, customs and so on. These four areas alone account for 63 per cent of the total budget:

- National Security is the largest at 22 per cent;
- Education, 17 per cent;
- Health Services, 15 per cent; and
- Social Services and Welfare account for 9 per cent of the budget.

Of these, Mr. Speaker, only Health Services has the remit and ability to make a contribution to Government coffers by charging reasonable fees for services provided. I mention this to point out that this Government is not only funding these necessary services adequately, but that money does not fall to earth like Manna from heaven.

It comes from duties and fees paid by families and businesses but we know it is the businesses that contribute to the bulk of this funding, whether directly to the coffers of government; or indirectly by creating

jobs and purchasing from or supporting our local businesses. This economic eco-system needs to be appreciated, nurtured, and allowed to grow sustainably so that all of us in the Cayman Islands can benefit from having opportunities for jobs through enhancing the education system as well as ensuring that there are real opportunities available for jobs.

Mr. Speaker, let me pause as I say that because many times we have businesspeople coming to the Cayman Islands with projects and so forth, promising they can provide all these jobs for Caymanians and for some reason at the end of the day, the way we sign the contract, they cannot be held to account in terms of employing the number of Caymanians that was set out. We need to take a different approach in approving projects coming to this country. There is no sense in us approving any project that does not mean Caymanians any good.

Mr. Speaker, there are many ways the Government can approach these persons who come to us on a monthly basis with new projects, et cetera. We need to somehow tie them to what they set out and if not met, they are penalised because the Government only acts on the strength of what it can do for Caymanians; and not only this Government, but many others have surely been misled in terms of what the projections predicted in the start.

This Budget and the policies and plans put forward address these issues and look to ensure that Caymanian families will benefit. It also seeks to benefit the needs of businesses, especially small businesses, to ensure that these engines of our economy can grow strong so that Cayman and Caymanians can remain strong. This is the prosperity the Premier spoke of, and for those who need a bit of help, we will ensure they are not left out or left behind.

We are a caring and empathetic government, and so we will not only ensure that social welfare programmes receive additional funds to assist people in need, but also that the elderly and those with special needs are cared for. It is a budget that provides a stable society while ensuring that needed infrastructure is in place; by enhancing security in our communities and around our borders while keeping the Government's finances stable by providing good surpluses, putting cash aside for rainy days and paying down debt — all while introducing no new taxes.

There is no such thing as perfection, Mr. Speaker, but I know that you will appreciate the effort and decisions that go into creating a budget. There are some across the floor who have sat on the government benches and may have some idea as to what it takes to get to where we are today, but even they have not done this for many years so I dare say that, while the process may be familiar to them, the scale of the many needs one has to decide on today is not what it was when they were here.

We have worked hard over many weeks and have arrived at a balanced budget that provides the

surplus it needs yet allows the country and our people to meet our many needs. It was important to me to mention these things, Mr. Speaker, because it is important that the country appreciates how well this Government of Unity has worked together over these five months. As this budget shows, we have done so much to make the lives of Caymanians better.

Mr. Speaker, since coming into office earlier this year, I have found that much work has been happening and progress being made; however, there is still much more to be done. I have heard about the challenges that have arisen and have been met over the past several years, as Government has worked to get its finances back on firm footing. Mr. Speaker, the public demand for government services and their expectation of quality services has increased over the years, but the government simply cannot afford to meet every expectation and undertake all the projects that are needed or requested.

It is a struggle I am sure many of my colleagues in this honourable House can relate to and have experienced first-hand; however, Mr. Speaker, as I said before, I believe that through some tough decisions and discussions, our Government has arrived at a budget that will help the country grow and fosters the stability, empathy, and prosperity the Honourable Premier spoke about in his contribution. As Minister, I would like to take this opportunity to update the Members of this House on some of the work that has been done before I move on to outline my Ministry's plans for the upcoming budget period.

Mr. Speaker, the current financial year saw many changes. It was an 18-month budget, 18-month financial period to move our financial year end to coincide with the calendar year, and there was an election in the midst of the financial year as well, and while government's financial situation had improved, there was still a need for prudent budgeting and close monitoring of expenditure. This was important to ensure we do not lose the gains made in recent years to stabilise government finances. Despite these many challenges, my Ministry and the agency under it worked extremely hard to deliver our outputs with the resources available.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry spans a broad range of subject areas, so I will take some time to address each in turn, starting with the subject area of health.

The Department of Health Regulatory Services (DHRS) continued their work under the Health Practise Law with the registration of approximately 1,472 health care practitioners with their respective Councils as of September 2017, an increase of approximately 19 per cent over the previous year. The Medical and Dental Council (MDC) has approximately 481 registered practitioners as of September 2017. The Council for Professions Allied with Medicine (CPAM) has approximately 429 registered practitioners; the Nursing and Midwifery Council has 489 registered practitioners; and the Pharmacy Council has 73

registered practitioners in September 2017. The DHRS had also supported the Health Practise Commission (HPC) with the inspection and registration of approximately 144 health care facilities over the three Islands. This is an increase of approximately 15 per cent in the number of health care facilities over the previous year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hard-working staff at the Department of Health and Regulatory Services for their efforts, as well as the members of the Health Practise Commission, and the various Councils for the time they gave up to help ensure that the Health Care Practitioners who deliver health care in the Cayman Islands are appropriately qualified and experienced, and the health care facilities are held to appropriate patient safety standards.

Mr. Speaker, many members will recall that there have been some amendments to the Health Insurance Law and Regulations over the past several years, including the recent introduction of a process for the certification and renewal of nine approved health care insurance providers. This new process allows the Health Insurance Commission to closely review and monitor the approved insurance on a regular basis, and is designed to ensure that the approved insurers meet conditions and appropriate standards to conduct health insurance business.

The Superintendent of Health Insurance and his team have been working closely with the Health Insurance Commission to educate all the stakeholders regarding their rights and obligations under the Health Insurance Law and Regulations. They have also worked very hard to resolve approximately 77 per cent of the complaints and enquiries they receive regarding health insurance in the Cayman Islands. Mr. Speaker, on average, there are usually approximately 500 health-insurance-related issues per month that the team of DHRS has to investigate and address; a hefty number, I may add. These issues include notification of policy termination from approved insurers, complaints from health care providers, complaints and enquiries from insured persons, and complaints and enquiries from the approved insurers. I want to commend the staff at the DHRS and the Health Insurance Commission members for the work they have been doing to deal with these many issues on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Speaker, over the past financial period, the Superintendent of Health Insurance also worked closely with the team at the Department of Immigration to improve information sharing and clarify the requirements for health insurance for all categories of work permit applications and increase the ability to monitor and enforce the provisions of the Health Insurance Law.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am proud of the Health Insurance Committee for taking on the challenge of Schik60 for older persons because when persons retire, it is hard to get health insurance and it

is more expensive so we need to protect our elderly and ensure that they get the best care possible and it is affordable.

Mr. Speaker, I am still baffled at how we do not cover children. Our children do not have free health care; this is a vexing issue for many people throughout the country.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker, I want to note this publicly. If you understand the strain that this has caused... we need to note what has happened over the past 20 years of *indirect* taxes that have been levied on our people, one of them being health insurance where they had to cover their children. These policies can go up to \$1,500, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine \$1,500 per month coming out of a person's salary? The number and quality of things that they could do for their children. We need to find the way to ensure that the parents of this country are relieved. The increased compliance that has resulted from their joint efforts and a real win-win for all involved has set an excellent example for agencies to follow.

Mr. Speaker, I now wish to speak to some of the work that has been done in the area of mental health. The global statistics suggest that one in five people suffers from mental health issues, which is a staggering figure. The Cayman Islands is facing a similar level of incidence, including our children and some of our Members in here. If we do not spot incidents in children early enough and get them appropriate help, in many cases, they will have many more challenges as they progress to adulthood. It is an area of our health, Mr. Speaker, that I believe we all need to increase our focus if we hope to achieve health and well-being for all.

I am pleased to report, Mr. Speaker that the Mental Health Commission has continued to meet on a regular basis to address many important issues around mental health in the Cayman Islands. The nine-member Commission is chaired by Dr. Marc Lockhart and has a broad Mandate regarding mental health in the Cayman Islands. They have been working to increase awareness, particularly with the training of front-line staff such as police officers, social workers, and health care providers.

Mr. Speaker, earlier I mentioned indirect taxes; it is not indirect taxes, it is indirect costs, as it is not paid to the government.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident the work they (the Mental Health Commission) do and the advice they provide to the Ministry will help to improve all aspects of mental health in the Cayman Islands. In addition to the work of the Mental Health Commission, the Ministry has been forging ahead with the procurement process for a long-term residential mental health facility and the formulation of a mental health policy. I am pleased to advise, Mr. Speaker, that the policy has

been completed and I plan to Table it in this honourable House in the very near future.

Staying with Mental Health, I would like to now speak to some of the work that has been done by the Department of Counselling Services, which includes the Family Resource Centre (FRC), the Counselling Centre and the Caribbean Haven Residential Centre.

Mr. Speaker, during the past year, programmes and services offered by the Department of Counselling Services (DCS) were expanded or enhanced to address a broader range of emerging needs more effectively in our society and to improve the functioning of those who access services. The Family Resource Centre extended their skill-building programmes which it offers to parents up to twelve weeks to improve outcomes, and staff were trained to deliver specialised parenting programmes that target special needs populations. The Family Resource Centre also introduced SNAP [Stop Now and Play], an internationally recognised model for teaching troubled children and their parents effective emotion regulation, self-control, and problem-solving skills. In addition, new support groups have been introduced to help victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the Counselling Centre restructured its hours of service delivery to be more responsive to persons in crisis and to coordinate their care more effectively during this difficult time. They also undertook co-facilitation of groups with the FRC to enhance programmes.

At the Caribbean Haven Residential Centre, they undertook an expansion of the adjunct services, such as creative arts therapy and farming, as well as the modification to the length of the programme that offers more options to meet the needs of the population that they serve.

I would like to now speak to the work of the National Drug Council (NDC). Over the past financial period, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise Members of this honourable House that the National Drug Council has continued its efforts to educate and prevent drug and alcohol abuse on many fronts. They have continued their advocacy for change to the Liquor License Law and increased social responsibility, as well as working on the development of a prevention framework to guide prevention efforts. They have also been working to increase the connection with the school curriculum, creating session outlines, activities, and resources for drug education and prevention programmes.

Mr. Speaker, this has included a particular focus on the development of education and prevention curriculum for primary schools. In addition, the National Drug Council has continued its effort of the Youth-to-Youth Programme, which engages young people through meaningful activities and experiences to develop and implement their own ideas to create positive change. The NDC recently launched the

Youth-to-Youth programme in Cayman Brac, and I would like to thank the residents of Cayman Brac for their support of this new initiative.

The NDC also completed the administration of the Prison Survey for 2017. The data gathered in this survey will aid the development and strengthening of programmes and policies and allow for more informed advocacy for policies and programmes that assist in rehabilitation. It will also help the NDC to understand the nature and extent of the substance use among inmates in the Cayman Islands and to be able to determine the trend in drug use patterns over time. Mr. Speaker, the NDC has also completed the first-ever evaluation of a drug treatment court; the results of which they will be sharing with the judicial stakeholders in the coming weeks.

While health is a national issue, I think we can all agree, Mr. Speaker, that we each have a role to play in ensuring our individual health and well-being. The incidence of chronic, non-communicable diseases amongst the global population has continued to escalate and the Cayman Islands is following those global trends. Diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are all significant challenges for us as a nation, and they are driving up our health care costs, but also their negative impact on the quality of life of our people who suffer with these conditions.

We are also struggling with an increasing incidence of overweight and obesity among our residents of all ages, including our children. Mr. Speaker, the connection between nutrition and health was explored at the 8th Annual Health Care Conference, which took place in late October, and I am pleased to advise that over the course of the conference, over 1,200 delegates attended to hear from our excellent local and overseas speakers; learn first-hand about the latest information, and get practical tips to help them translate that information into action.

Mr. Speaker, I must add that eight years ago, when this conference first took place, the Ministry was very happy and excited that 250 people attended. I am happy that at this point, eight years later, we have over 1,200 delegates. It is my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that everyone who attended the conference will make a commitment to themselves to make some positive changes, no matter how small, to improve their personal health and well-being. It is often the small, sustainable changes, Mr. Speaker, that add up to big benefits. My goal for the conference next year is to include schools and children. We need to educate the next generation.

While there have been challenges, which I will speak to later, the Health Services Authority did have successes in the 2016-17 Financial Year. The Authority put a particular emphasis on its financial systems and processes with some positive results. They increased their cash reserves from \$3.8 million in June 2016, to \$26 million at the end of August 2017,

achieving a 90-day cash reserve as mandated in the Health Services Authority Law for the first time in the history of the Authority. The collections were improved by 57 per cent or \$34 million for the 12-month period ending the 31st of August 2017, and bad debt provision was reduced by 52 per cent from \$15.5 million at the end of August 2016 to \$7.4 million at the end of August 2017.

The HSA embarked on several capital improvements, including the completion of works on the replacement back-up generator for the George Town Hospital to increase the generator capacity to power 100 per cent of the hospital's operations, should the need arise. Mr. Speaker, we know that at some point that need will arise, and when it does, this necessary improvement may help in saving lives.

In addition to improving their finances and capital projects, the Authority also worked hard to improve the patient experience at the HSA. This included the introduction of a new online patient portal that allows patients electronic access to their medical records and appointment scheduling. They also strengthen their public health surveillance through the expansion of clinical diagnostic capabilities or testing of viral diseases that may pose a threat to public health, such as Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya, and worked with the MRCU to have the Cayman Islands removed from the CDC advisory list of countries with Zika. While this was important to ensure that our valued tourism business was not damaged by this listing, it also helped reassure the public that we are safe from this deadly virus.

It is also notable, Mr. Speaker, that the HSA has undertaken a targeted campaign to register new blood donors, which increased the blood donor pool by 50 per cent by adding 500 new donors. We are fortunate to have so many individuals willing to give time and plasma to help save a life.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry has two other health-related agencies: the Department of Environmental Health (DEH) and the Mosquito Research and Control Unit (MRCU). In the 2016-2017 Financial Year, the Mosquito Research and Control Unit continued to provide its usual outstanding level of service. During the year, they continued their control efforts against disease-carrying mosquitoes with an emphasis on the prevention of local transmission of Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika, and Malaria.

Their efforts in this regard include house to house inspections, ground and aerial applications and perimeter treatments; however, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that the Department continues its work to control the domestic pesky mosquitoes — mainly swamp and pasture land mosquito species that are a biting nuisance on all three Islands. Control of these is important from an economic as well as the quality of life perspective. The Department has continued to utilise aircraft for conventional insecticide control and

ground-fogging vehicles to reduce and control the number of adult-biting mosquitoes.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the MRCU has continued utilising aircraft to conduct large-scale applications of larvicide granules and pellets on all three islands to kill aquatic-stage larvae and thereby prevent the emergence of biting mosquitoes. We have addressed a total treatment area of approximately 16,000 acres, targeting main breeding sites, tourist locations, and centres of human population. The *Aedes Aegypti*, which is an invasive species in the Cayman Islands, is the prime vector of viruses including Zika, Dengue, Chikungunya, and Yellow Fever. The friendly *Aedes Aegypti* is a genetically-modified male mosquito which is effectively sterile. When it mates with a female *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito, the offspring dies before they can reproduce; hence, with successive releases, the *Aedes Aegypti* population is reduced. The friendly *Aedes Aegypti* male mosquito cannot bite or transmit diseases to humans.

Mr. Speaker, the evaluation of the friendly *Aedes Aegypti* technique for control of this disease vector is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and has been approved for use by the authorities in the Cayman Islands. The department is currently reviewing the success rate of the programme to date, and discussing the next steps to further explore the use of this new tool in the control of *Aedes Aegypti*.

Equally important is the work of the Department of Environmental Health. Over the past financial period, the hard-working team at the DEH continued to deliver the services that are so essential for public health in the Cayman Islands. The DEH filled some key personnel positions including two environmental health officers — district and food; the public relations officer and an engineering officer. Mr. Speaker, filling these positions has improved the operations and efficiencies of the DEH operation. The DEH also took on six temporary workers to assist with the continued success of the expanded recycling programme at the landfill operations and, in my opinion, they should keep them full-time.

Mr. Speaker, by dropping the recyclable materials at the collection bins, which are conveniently located at supermarkets in Grand Cayman, residents are now able to recycle glass and ceramic, cardboard and mixed paper, plastics (numbers 1 and 2), and aluminium cans. With each of us doing our part to recycle through the DEH expanded recycling programme, we can see a reduction in the amount of waste that is going into the landfill. I visited the recycling area and the quality of work our Caymanians are doing is amazing. This only goes to say, Mr. Speaker, that our Caymanians only need a chance.

Mr. Speaker, Members will be aware that we have not had any major landfill fires in the past 18 months. This has been the result of some significant ongoing operational improvements at the George

Town Landfill. In addition, as part of the fire prevention and monitoring, the department has installed three cameras at the landfill in Cayman Brac and two cameras at the landfill in Little Cayman and access to these camera feeds will also be given to 911 and the Fire Department.

Another long-standing problem is on its way to being resolved, Mr. Speaker, namely the massive stock pile of used tyres. A contract for the processing of used tyres was rendered through the Central Tenders Committee and local firm Island Recycling was the successful tenderer. I have been advised, Mr. Speaker, that the tyre stockpile has been dramatically reduced, and the work is nearly complete. It is also important to note that the product of the shredding is a tyre-derived aggregate which is going to be used locally in keeping with our drive for sustainability and embracing the principles of reduce, reuse, recycle, recover, and only then dispose as outlined in our National Solid Waste Management Policy.

Mr. Speaker, continuing on the topic of waste management, it would be remiss of me not to mention the progress that has been made in the procurement process for the new Integrated Solid Waste Management System. As was announced recently, we have reached a stage in the procurement process of identifying a preferred bidder and negotiations to agree on a final contract are ongoing. It appears, Mr. Speaker, that we are on schedule to have a new integrated solid waste management system, fully operational, in early 2021. Some components of the system will be coming online earlier than that, but that is our target to see the entire system up and running.

Members may recall that the project includes several components including composting, further expanded household waste recycling, waste to energy, and closure of the three existing landfills. I am very excited, Mr. Speaker, about the progress that has been made so far, and I am looking forward to seeing the process through to completion in the coming years. Mr. Speaker, many Ministers have attempted to bring some resolve, and I am happy to be the Minister standing here and bringing it forward. As they say, some plant, some water.

Mr. Speaker, turning now to the subjects of Environment and Housing: the Department of the Environment has had a very busy year with numerous important issues to deal with while the National Housing Development Trust (NHDT) has been working to progress plans for affordable homes for Caymanians. There are some untenable situations happening right now in the Cayman Islands and there are some challenges ahead for this Government to tackle, such as the National Conservation Law; we already started to put our Review Committee together to take this on head-on.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the vexing issue of the Spear Gun Licence. I think that Caymanians need to have an edge on something, and that our children

need to see a bit of what we used to do when we were younger. This Spear Gun Law will be enacted very, very shortly and Caymanians will be afforded the opportunity, even if it is in small leaps, to again buy spare parts and utilise their spear guns.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen first-hand the benefits of Marine Parks and I am happy that we made those moves back then. We also have to be very conscious that we are not servicing the departments; the departments are servicing our people. We need to remember why this country's loudest voice elected 19 people to look at their affairs, and we need to remember who makes policy and who carries it out.

Mr. Speaker, I have much appreciated assistance from Captain Eugene Ebanks, the Member for West Bay Central and Councillor, to assist me in this matter, and I invite him to give a detailed update on these subjects in his upcoming budget address.

I must note that we have the outstanding issue of green iguanas. I understand that we had some programmes in place. Not many people were happy with the amount they were paying for the bounty, and we need to find a way to move this forward; but I understand that while we were trying to find a way and the best plan to move this forward with the monies that have been given to us, we have found a species in Cayman that is doing a very good job killing hundreds of them on a daily basis, namely, the dog.

[Laughter and thumping on desk]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Speaker, while I am very passionate about all the subjects in my portfolio, I have to confess that I am especially passionate about culture. Members who know me will know that I have a life-long love of culture and performing arts, particularly music and the visual arts. I have this passion, Mr. Speaker, for seeing people enjoy quality entertainment and having fun all together in unity. Music is one of the things that brings people together; the other is sports, so we cannot lose sight of this.

I believe culture is a subject area that is integral to several aspects of life in our Islands, in particular, because of the history of welcoming so many people of other nationalities to our shores. The work of the cultural entities and individuals is essential to protecting and promoting our culture and heritage, and I believe that we need to do more to value their work and their contributions.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year the Cayman Islands National Museum's highlights included the following inspirational exhibitions:

1. Ms. Georgette Ebanks' [book] *"Twenty-Five Years: Piece by Piece"*;
2. Museum Dress-Up;
3. Legends of Scuba Diving – Local Honourees;
4. Ardyth Smith – In Black and White;

5. Shaped by the Sea [honouring] Capt. Chuckie Ebanks; and
6. Shark Talk – Ocean Conservation.

Mr. Speaker, these exhibitions were in addition to an exceptional audio-visual experience, an interpretive garden, and the permanent natural and cultural history galleries. The Museum also provided complimentary school and special partner tours and speaker series and a monthly “*See wha’ I saying*” radio programme. In addition, this past summer, the Museum offered two one-week summer camps entitled “Immersed for Youth”, which were based on a maritime theme.

The staff represented the Museum at CARIFESTA [Caribbean Festival of Arts] and carried a special exhibition to Barbados in August. They also sent a young professional staff member to the Museums Association of the Caribbean Conference in October and the Director has been invited to give a keynote on the Caribbean Underwater Heritage at the 3rd Caribbean Conference for National Trust and Preservation Societies in Curacao in November. I think it is safe to say, Mr. Speaker, that the team at the Cayman Islands National Museum has had a busy and productive year.

The Cayman National Cultural Foundation (CNCF) has also had a very busy year but very productive, Mr. Speaker. The CNCF is in the extensive research and writing phase for a new book on the life and work of Caymanian intuitive artist Gladwyn K. Bush (Ms. Lassie), which will delve further into her history and that of her community and feature previously unpublished works. The book is expected to be completed in early 2018, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure it will be one we will all want to add to our collections.

The CNCF was the focal point for organising the Cayman Islands representation at CARIFESTA in August this year in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, we were represented by a 47-member contingent; some of the best our Islands have to offer in the disciplines of dance, drama, music, visual arts, literary arts, culinary arts, and heritage preservation. I am pleased to report that coverage of the Cayman Islands in the Barbados National Press was widely positive. Visual and heritage arts exhibitions which were coordinated by the National Gallery and the National Museum, respectively, also received plaudits.

Mr. Speaker, we also had the benefit of being able to experience the tremendous talent on our local stage. Before departing for the Caribbean Festival of Arts, the CNCF presented the CARIFESTA Showcase over three nights at the Harquail Theatre for local audiences to experience the synthesis of theatre, dance, live music, visual arts and fashion being presented at CARIFESTA by exceptional Cayman artists.

On the youth front, for five weeks in July and August, the Young-at-Arts students received intensive training and development and rehearsed their work

show production, an adaptation of Frank McField’s Playground including music, song and dance. Their work show was presented at the Harquail Studio over four performances from the 4th to the 6th August.

Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a busy summer, as the CNCF also offered its annual affordable summer camp for ages 6 to 16, with a focus on arts and culture. I am happy to report that in pursuit of their goal of preserving, celebrating and propagating the musical traditions of the Cayman Islands the Cayman Islands Folk Singers currently have more than 25 songs in their repertoire, in addition to a variety of seasonal songs. Work continues on the editing, mixing and mastering of their soon-to-be-released CD of traditional Caymanian songs which I am sure we can all agree will be a welcome addition to the catalogue of traditional music.

Staying with culture, Mr. Speaker, I would now like to touch on some of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands’ achievements. The National Gallery has executed an average of 60 events per month, which have included educational programmes, events and lectures. Through their efforts they have reached 7,615 local students via education programming, school exhibitions, and collection tours and festivals, and recorded approximately 22,139 general visitors to the National Gallery in the 2016-17 year-to-date.

Over the past year, the National Gallery hosted eight major art exhibitions and several smaller educational exhibitions with educational workshops, screenings, and lectures for each of the major exhibitions. Highlights include exhibitions *Revive: “Upon the Seas, Salt Water in Their Veins”*, Celebrating Traditional and Contemporary Caymanian Craft and Horacio Esteban’s Sculpture – Artist/Artisan.

Mr. Speaker, the National Gallery has also supported Caymanian artists in exhibitions in Miami, Barbados, Aruba, and London, and managed the exhibition for the Cayman Catboat Club. The National Gallery has also been working very hard to raise the visibility of the Cayman arts scene abroad and to increase their linkages regionally, as part of their efforts.

The National Gallery hosted two international Arts and Museum Conferences: the Museum Association of the Caribbean’s Annual Conference, 2016 October, and Tilting Axis, a regional group designed to create strategic alliances for the further development of infrastructure, production, and markets for the Caribbean’s visual arts sector. Both of these conferences were well received and afforded the opportunity for some of our local artists and cultural practitioners to network with some of their regional and global counterparts.

Mr. Speaker, the National Gallery was recognised for Top Employer Award in 2016, the third year in a row. Not forgetting the aspiring cultural practitioners, the National Gallery’s creative career programme, a career development work experience and summer internship and training programme, welcomed seven

students and was awarded the Chamber of Commerce Commitment to Education Grand Award at the Inaugural Business Excellence Award in October.

Another significant achievement was the publication of *The Arts of the Cayman Islands*, the first comprehensive book exploring Caymanian art history and the National Gallery's National Collection. This amazing resource has images of the work and bios of 75 artists; thanks to the generous sponsorship, copies of this book were gifted to all the schools and libraries in Cayman and if you are wondering how you might get a copy, I am pleased to advise you, Mr. Speaker, that the book is currently for sale in the National Gallery's gift shop.

The Speaker: I am going to get one.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I am proud to announce, Mr. Speaker, that on becoming Minister I took a tour of the National Gallery, met with the Director and viewed the many pieces. I asked her, as I do when I tour each department, what her main desire was in the budget. She said if she could only get some funding to buy more Caymanian art, and I was amazed she said that. I can advise this honourable House that this art will be purchased before December 2017 — five local Caymanian artists' works that will not only be bought but will also be displayed at the National Gallery.

The National Gallery also celebrated its 20th Anniversary in 2017. Celebrations were launched with a maritime art exhibition featuring 35 local artists and continued with the Arts on the Road project of classroom visits to all Cayman Islands primary schools with a maritime themed activity.

Mr. Speaker, I trust you will agree that much work has been done and much has been achieved by the agencies under my Ministry. I recognise that much of this work was initiated prior to my recent victory in the general election and my appointment as Minister, but I am very grateful for the opportunities that I have had to bring some of these programmes forward to the important milestone. Sometimes we have many plans but not many signatures.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to go on record to thank all the hard-working professional heads of department in my Ministry, their teams for the work they have done and continue to do. I also want to thank the fantastic team at my Ministry for their efforts to deliver on the government policies and for their support during my first few months as their new Minister.

Looking ahead, Mr. Speaker, while reports indicate that much has been achieved over the past year, I believe in some respects the work is just getting started and there is much more to be done; accordingly, I would now like to outline some of the agency's plans for the 2018-2019 Financial Year.

Starting in the area of health care, we will be focusing efforts across the area of improved financial

management and performance, delivering high-quality patient care and enhanced patient experience, improving population health outcomes, future planning, improved data capturing and reporting, investing in future health care leaders, expanding care in the Sister Islands and increasing public awareness.

Turning first to the area of improving financial management and performance, which has been the subject of a great deal of discussion these past few weeks, I will start by noting that as Minister responsible for health, I, like my colleagues in the Government, have a goal of ensuring that the Health Services Authority does the breakdown of the issues around the financial management, in particular, but in some cases around performance outcomes as well. These concerns have been perennial and whatever the cause, we must find a solution. As the Premier noted, we will need to meet with the board and management and determine how best to move forward successfully; perhaps with the assistance of a professional independent review, but we must get this fixed.

Mr. Speaker, focusing on the positive, the Health Services Authority has put forward an action plan to improve things. They are working hard to have a clean audit opinion through the strengthening of financial records, implementation of a robust compliance programme, and further enhancements of existing payment policies. The Authority has contracted with a reputable third-party agency to collect outstanding debts. The Authority is working to strengthen internal controls and payment policies to ensure prompt payment is received, including from insurance companies and government agencies. The HSA also plans to reduce operational expenditure by implementing an energy management programme for phased replacement of lighting fixtures to new and more energy-efficient LED fixtures [and] commission an engineering study to determine improvements to modernise the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. This will help reduce utility costs, improve systems reliability, and be better for the environment.

Another area is to review human resources needs and develop plans to determine appropriate staffing levels for all areas of the hospital operations and seek to reduce high levels of overtime expenditure. Reviewing all areas of hospital operation determined opportunities for partnership with the private sector to achieve greater efficiencies and cost reduction. Introduction of an employee wellness programme to improve employee health and wellness, and incentivise employees to pursue healthy activities while reducing staff health care costs in regard to the authority's plans for delivering high-quality patient care and enhanced patient experience.

Some of the action items include the pursuit of a joint-commission international accreditation to measure and certify the HSA's clinical quality against international standards and implement robust external oversight of key clinical quality goals and performance.

es. I note, Mr. Speaker, that this has been a stated goal for over a year; perhaps two years, and I intend to push the HSA and its Management and Board to get this done next year. They have been successfully working to get their lab JCI [Joint Commission International] accredited, and it should be part of their plans to extend this to all their medical services as part of delivering quality patient care and improving outcomes.

The implementation of a Patient and Family Advisory Committee with representation from a broad cross-section of the community to provide advice, feedback, and external review of patient processes to continuously enhance the patient experience at all HSA facilities. Recruitment of additional patient experience staff to proactively address patient concerns, provide support to patients and families with navigating the hospital system, coordinate appointments, and serve as patient advocates.

Improvements to accident and emergency (A&E), with the addition of two clinical consult rooms to increase patients throughout the emergency rooms and reduce waiting times. Mr. Speaker, I can only tell you that I visit the A&E area after hours, and sometimes I am there by myself, and it still takes a long time. I need to be honest, Mr. Speaker: We need to do something and if we, as a Government, cannot find the way to assist the HSA in improving just this small problem that they have, I think it will be a failing.

Consideration is for the needs and expansion of clinical services to meet the growing health care needs of the community, including the addition of a dedicated cardiology department as well as acute care and other services; but Mr. Speaker, whilst this is a stated objective of the management and board, I am of the view, as I noted earlier, that as part of their plans to determine opportunities for partnerships with the private sector, it behoves us and the HSA to ensure that we are not duplicating services unnecessarily by any of the proposed expansions.

In my view, where an affordable and quality service is available at other health-care institutions — and this includes services at Health City Cayman Islands and Doctors Hospital — we should think very, very carefully before introducing additional services. Often, we serve customers and patients best by focusing on what we do well and leaving others to do what they do well. The HSA will also be looking at introducing efficiencies with better use of technology, initially by providing more convenience to patients via online appointment bookings.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to improving population health outcomes, the Authority plans to expand the CayHealth Programme to include civil servants and other targeted population groups as a critical strategy to improve population health outcomes and reduce the levels of chronic non-communicable diseases. The Authority plans to develop a 20-year master facility and service development plan to meet the

growing population and health care needs of the Cayman Islands community over the next two decades. This process will include the review of the District Health Centres as well as the George Town Hospital, Faith Hospital, and Little Cayman Clinic.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority will also undertake the implementation enhancement of health information data systems to ensure accurate and adequate capture of health data, to better inform health policy and implementation; and to trend population health statistics and reporting and measure health outcomes against international benchmarks and the World Health Organization's health development goals and measurements.

Another key goal for the Authority in the coming Financial Year is the expansion of training and development opportunities for young Caymanians to pursue careers in health through increasing available spots in the student summer internship programme, collaboration with stakeholders on scholarship opportunities for advanced specialist training, increasing available opportunities for physical internship and training as well as enhancing the Authority's capabilities as a teaching institution for students in the nursing programme at the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) and clinicians at the University of the West Indies.

Mr. Speaker, just recently I was proud to see ten new Caymanian nursing students graduate from the Nursing School. They are about to embark on a rewarding career and I know that in years to come we will see many more Caymanian men and women join the nursing field. I was equally proud to see twenty-eight graduates from the School of Hospitality; as the Premier noted, we need to have our young people look to professional trades once again and yes, hospitality, like nursing, is a professional trade.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority plans to extend care in the Sister Islands and increase staff for the Little Cayman Clinic to enhance 24-hour coverage and service.

Mr. Speaker, the Health Services Authority has ambitious plans for the coming Financial Year. I believe that with hard work and dedication, these goals can be achieved. As the Premier noted when he gave his Policy Statement, it is important to ensure that we carefully consider the future of the HSA and that improving the efficiencies and effectiveness of our health care system will require long-term strategic change and not short-term fixes and plans that go nowhere. There is much good work being done and we will collectively ensure that this continues and is enhanced further. In my opinion, the HSA must assess its core business and improve on this, and we must appreciate and encourage private partners.

For the upcoming financial years, the Department of Health and Regulatory Services plans to:

- maintain and monitor the National Health Insurance System database for medically indigent persons;
- effectively collect the Segregated Insurance Fund payments and monitor the number of insured persons in the Cayman Islands;
- resolve disputes, complaints, and queries about the provision of health insurance;
- review and update the Standard Health Insurance fees;
- monitor and enforce the standard premium for the Standard Health Insurance Contract (SHIC);
- maintain a public education campaign on health insurance and health practise legislation; and, importantly,
- investigate the feasibility of an affordable schedule of health insurance benefits that specifically meets the needs of retirees and older persons.

Mr. Speaker, this last item is an important one, as part of what I expect will be a review of our overall health insurance system. It is important and, in fact, necessary, that we find a way to allow older persons who can afford to pay for health insurance to do so, but it must be affordable and it must provide suitable benefits that meet their needs. It is during our senior years when we most need health care and insurance coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will be undertaking a review of the Health Practise Law and Regulations in the new year. While the legislation was comprehensively reviewed in 2009-2010, the time has come for another comprehensive review to be done to ensure it is still fit for purpose and provides an appropriate governing framework. This review will be undertaken in consultation with relevant stakeholders and I hope to bring the amendments to this honourable House in the second half of 2018.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Counselling Services has plans to further enhance its services during the 2018-2019 budget period. At Caribbean Haven Residential Centre, specific treatment options will be available, within the context of the programme offered there, to meet the needs of a portion of the population who have substance abuse issues and struggle concurrently with mood disorders and other mental health problems.

At the Counselling Centre, new options will be developed to improve treatments for clients, including those who are recreational marijuana users, to educate them and address any potential dependency issues. Partnerships with other agencies will see increased referrals to parenting programmes offered through the Family Resource Centre. This will include services for families of residents of the Cays Foundation Homes in order to support their reintegration back into their family. In addition, Mr. Speaker, services

provided in Cayman Brac for the Counselling Centre and the Family Resource Centre staff will be increased to more adequately meet the needs that have been identified.

The National Drug Council will continue its important work in the upcoming budget, including increased programmes in the schools throughout the year. They also plan to conduct the 9th cycle of the Cayman Islands Student Drug Use Survey in 2018 to help capture data that will describe the prevalence and patterns of alcohol and other drug use amongst the Cayman Islands students in Years 7 through 12. The data from this study is important to help them understand the nature and extent of the drug problem amongst Middle and High School students, track changes in drug use patterns over time, and aid the development and strengthening of prevention programmes and policies.

The National Drug Council has identified some areas for legislative reform that they hope to advocate for and assist with within the coming financial years. These include revisions and updates to the Misuse of Drugs Law to create a framework to address precursors for drugs, and enhance legislative provisions and policies for prescription drugs monitoring. This last area is of particular importance, Mr. Speaker, as there has been evidence in student surveys and in the collection of reporting of narcotic and psychotropic drugs that suggest the misuse and abuse of prescribed drugs.

I mentioned the Annual Health Care Conference early in my contribution and the many benefits and initiatives that have come out of the conference over the years. A couple of years ago, the team focused on embracing emerging trends in health and has included some speakers from a focus on ensuring quality, dignified, meaningful, end of life care.

The Speaker: Honourable Minister, unless you can finish in another couple of minutes, I propose to take the break.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: I can wrap up pretty—

The Speaker: How much time do you want?

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Five, ten minutes.

The Speaker: Okay.

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

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to be a part of the Government that is moving forward with the Integrated Solid Waste Management System or ISWMS Project, as we call it in the Ministry. This is an important project which represents a long-term sustainable solution for all three Islands. It has reached the important preferred bidder milestone and negotiations are ongoing to arrive at a contract. It has been a

long road to get to this point and the Ministry has been following the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR) procurement process to reach this point in the project, but I believe the result of the time and care that has been taken is a project that will meet our needs for decades to come.

The existing landfills in all three Islands will be closed and remediated and we will see increased household goods recycling and composting of yard materials and waste-to-energy plant and a small, engineered landfill to accommodate the residential waste. This integrated system will reduce the volume of waste going to the landfill by almost 90 percent, which will be a significant achievement. Mr. Speaker, we are on track to see the ISWMS fully implemented and operational in early 2021. Components of this system will be coming on line between now and then, so residents can expect to see some changes before that completion date.

I am very excited to see this important project moving forward and would like to take this opportunity to thank the Steering Committee Members, my Ministry team and the Major Projects Office team for the tremendous effort. They have made this possible and have finally put this much-needed solution to our long-standing problem within our reach.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note that I am happy we are funding up to \$1.1 million to kick off the programme for the eradication of the Green Iguana in our Islands. This will need to be an ongoing project, Mr. Speaker, but we are making a serious start with the services available to us.

Mr. Speaker, housing is also one of my areas and I will tell you that I am happy to be the Minister to be able to finally start some new houses in these Islands. We have not built any homes in probably about five years, and I am happy that within two months we should start building. Everything is in order, site preparation has already been done, and we hope to move forward very quickly. The Board has just been put together and I am very excited about it. I believe they have Cayman's interest at heart that all people of these Islands who desire a home should have the opportunity to own a piece of this rock.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Yep.

The Speaker: You leave him alone.

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues in this honourable House for their support during our Government's young tenure. I look forward to continuing to work with them for the benefit of the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I must mention that I am encouraged by a Motion being brought to the House by

my Savannah and Bodden Town colleagues. I pray we find a way to incorporate this, as it has great potential to employ Caymanians. All parties, all of us, campaigned on it, and I am happy to see the Savannah and Bodden Town Members bring it forward. As a Government, we can only do our best to ensure that we listen to the Motion to see a way that, together, we can move this forward; but I thank my colleagues for Bodden Town West and Savannah, as I understand it, for bringing it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my Ministry's hard-working Heads of Department and staff for their efforts and support in delivering our Ministry's services and programmes. While I am sure you will agree that much work has been done and many good things achieved, there is still much more to do. I am confident that if we all work together, we can do great things for the people of the Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that it is my first budget and I want to thank the Deputy Governor for all the work he has been doing with the Civil Service. We have a really smart Civil Service team. We ought to be proud of those thousands of Caymanians who are in there. They are very smart, as you sit and listen to them. I just think we need to have stronger conversations — better direction, in terms of what it means when a politician is elected, even if it is not the one you preferred. What does it mean? I think there is much work to be done there. We need to ensure it is very meaningful; that when we elect a politician, they can have some effect and not seem powerless. We are the persons who make policy, and as long as we can remember that part, the rest should be fine.

I want to once again thank the people of Bodden Town East for selecting me out of a very hard process. I had to compete against everybody. I am the only politician who never had [another] politician on their platform. I cannot say I am proud of that, but I want to say that I know in 2021 they will be there.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour: Well, hopefully, as a Government we will do a good job and will have to stick together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the time in this honourable House to deliver my First Budget Speech. I want to thank my family and I want to thank God. God bless, good night.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: The House will suspend until 6:45 pm.

Proceedings suspended at 6:12 pm

Proceedings resumed at 7:04 pm

**APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL
YEARS 2018 and 2019) BILL, 2017**
[Continuation of debate thereon]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

The Honourable House has resumed its sitting.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

May I call on the Mover to— I called three times.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Member for South Sound can take a seat.

The normal rule is the Speaker calls three times, and not until after I called did my eye catch the Member for George Town Central. Members, you are going to have to pay close attention. If you are going to play out the waiting game, you will lose your chance, but because we have new Members, I will give some leeway.

I saw the Member for George Town Central.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for George Town Central.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to first say that I was expecting to hear at least some contributions from other Members of Government in respect to their position on what the Government has presented by way of budget debate, but I see politics is in full swing in respect of this waiting game that the public may not be aware of, for persons to have the last say.

The Speaker: Then, Honourable Member, you should get up when you are called upon by the Speaker. That will not be any politics when I call on you.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That statement was not directed at you, Sir, but I am not afraid to highlight the elephant in the room that we all play the game here; but I guess everyone is anticipating what I am going to say and [with] the time now being seven minutes past seven, I guess my time will be cut short, I don't know. I was expecting to speak tomorrow, but I definitely do not want to lose my opportunity to speak, so I will get started and shoot from the hip.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should start firstly, with the Honourable Premier and Leader of this "Unity Government"'s heading on the budget Policy Statement which starts with "Stability, Empathy and Prosperity". At first, I was quite happy to see the word

"empathy" there, Mr. Speaker, because I thought it was something the past administration did not have in respect to what the People of the Cayman Islands were going through; but I found myself having to re-search again, just for my own clarity of mind, what exactly was the meaning of "empathy". Just to check my brain, I said empathy is *the ability to understand and share the feelings of another* — so, basically, this administration is saying they understand and share the feelings of another.

Mr. Speaker, at this particular stage, having empathy throughout the campaign was good, but I think what this Policy Statement should say is "Stability, Action and Prosperity" because the people no longer want you to understand; they now want you to understand and do something about it. Just for the purpose of clarity, I think it is important that I define the word "action" and what it should be titled as, because the word action has so many different meanings and so many different forms, but in this case, it means "the fact or process of doing something typically to achieve an aim." That is what this Policy Statement should be labelled as but, I am not going to get into the nuances of what the Policy Statement is labelled as; we want to get into what is in the Policy Statement, Mr. Speaker.

I must say I am saddened that one of the top things that popped out to me which was a big campaign issue for many of us in this Legislative Assembly was not in this Policy Statement. I took the liberty of getting the Manifestos of as many people as I could who ran — who were elected in this House — in the short period of time when I recognised that I would need them; but, particularly, the one for The Progressives, because they hold the leadership position. I bring up the fact that within the Budget Statement there was no discussion — which my colleagues on this side have already highlighted, but I have to reiterate it because it is so important — about foreclosures in this country, so I asked if it was in their Manifesto. It wasn't, so obviously, Mr. Speaker, for the people of the Cayman Islands it is no surprise that it is not a priority for this administration.

Now, the question, Mr. Speaker, is going to come up: whether it was a priority for the three Members of the CDP [Cayman Democratic Party] and whether it was a priority for the two Independents of the current Government. I expect they will speak for themselves, because it was not in The Progressives Manifesto and it was not in the Statement of the Honourable Premier delivered to this honourable House, and the Statement obviously outlines the plan, by way of budget, of what the Government plans to address.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud that we have the Independent Member for Prospect, who was bold enough to show his ability to disagree with his own administration, at least on one point. Now, I am not going to hide the fact that he disagreed. What he has done is set a precedent to show that a person is ca-

pable of not necessarily agreeing with their own team; at least on that one issue.

He obviously highlighted many other things that he was in agreement with, so it means it is capable of happening; hence, I am going to assume, Mr. Speaker, that if the rest of the Members of the current Government do not stand up and state their position on things they do not agree with, the assumption has to be made that they are in agreement with anything that the Premier states in this honourable House. Respectfully, the Independent Member was bold enough to stand up and say, *I am Independent; I support and work with the Government*, but not on that one particular issue and the issue that we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, was the Port. I give him enough respect for that because history has shown that when you do not agree with the current leader of the Government, things do not go too well; and I refer to a former legislator, a person very honourable to me, Mr. Winston Connolly, who has given much —

The Speaker: Honourable Member, look at the Policy Statement and the Budget Speech; none of that is in there and it is not up for debate. I am sorry, but regardless of what your Backbench colleagues might be telling you, there is nothing in the debate on those two aspects, so please stick to what is in front of you.

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are you rising on a Point of Order?

POINT OF ELUCIDATION

Mr. V. Arden McLean: On a point of clarity because, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: There is no point of clarity. There is no room for—

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, you made the statement—

The Speaker: Member. Please.

There is no point of clarification here. The Member has been making a point which is not in front of us; nobody has referred to it.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Mr. Speaker, I was not talking about his point; that is not my business. You said, Sir, that regardless of what his Backbench colleagues have been telling him. I would respectfully ask that you name who those Backbench colleagues are, because I have not told him anything.

The Speaker: Maybe I do not see any Backbench colleagues. I was thinking there was one.

Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Well then, it must be the shadow Minister, then...

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town Central, please continue your speech.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do apologise if I have gone out of scope of the debate but, unfortunately, because the scope of the debate is very ambiguous at this point, there seems to be no true parameters because some members are allowed to go farther distances and some are not, so I apologise if I have gone out of scope because it is not very clear, Mr. Speaker.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, I just want to highlight some of the areas in the budget Policy Statement that draw concern for me and one would assume that if I have not highlighted it, as a concern, then I agree with it. One thing that was a bit of an issue for me was the notion of the Honourable Premier (I am assuming it was supported by his colleagues), doing a transshipment or there was the potential of a transshipment being done in George Town Harbour. That brings up a major concern for me. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that this administration has plans for the Port. The Deputy Premier highlighted that he was going to give us the cost amount, and never did, because he said, in response to the Honourable Opposition Leader, that he would give a number, and maybe the Premier in his response can tell the country that is awaiting the idea of what the price of this Port is going to be. I know the Port is a very big priority for this administration whether you agree with it or not; that is their position.

I am concerned that we are starting to get mixed messages now, in respect of what the Government plans to do in George Town Central because now we are hearing transshipment; we are hearing cruise port, and we are hearing re-vitalisation of George Town. Now, if we are going to beautify George Town Central, which is my constituency, I am almost certain that nobody in Cayman wants to see a transshipment, if one has an idea what a transshipment location looks like. It's a very large storage area, potentially acres of container upon container waiting to move to another location, and it is not a very beautiful sight.

I think the Government needs to clarify its position, particularly to my constituents in George Town Central, if that is the plan of this administration. I should definitely refer to exactly what he said in respect of his speech. It says, on page 19: **"The Port Authority has also received considerable interest from shipping companies that not only want to bring their larger ships here, but have indicated that Grand Cayman could serve as a transshipment port for perishable cargo out of Central America. The economic potential for George Town to serve as a trans-shipment port is certainly welcomed and will be pursued."** Words out of the Hon-

ourable Premier's mouth, who leads this administration.

Now, unless he is speaking about somewhere else in George Town, that also needs to be delivered to the people of this country where exactly he is talking about, because I can only assume, Mr. Speaker, that he is talking about George Town Central. If he is talking about George Town Central, Mr. Speaker, he needs to come and speak to my people, because we have agreed that, potentially, depending on the cost, a cruise port may be necessary for this country, but at no time did he speak to the people of George Town Central about a transshipment in George Town Central, so please, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Honourable Premier and his administration to clarify that point.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has used some very strong words in respect to nuclear options of price control. Huh! Mr Speaker, I was rather surprised to hear the Premier say the word price control because his colleague, his former running mate, almost ate me alive in the campaign when I mistakenly used the word "price control". I don't need to call his name, he has moved on and is doing well and I wish him well, but in the campaign, we used the word "price control" and it was a tactic to scare the business community to say Kenneth Bryan wanted price control in this country and what it would do to the business community, but the Honourable Premier is going to get up in this House and potentially say he will use price control as a nuclear option.

The part that is interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, is the part where he says this pertains to fuel, because fuel is a necessary commodity. Mr. Speaker, food in my stomach is also a necessary commodity for me to live, so please do not pick and choose what things you are willing to say "price control" for, because you see, price control for fuel is digestible to the voters of this country; they might not get too frustrated about that, but if we say price control for food, he knows that he may not get a good response on that, hence the reason the one line to say this is in reference to fuel. How can you tell my people that you are willing to use a nuclear option of price control only for fuel, when we know that there are persons out there who are taking advantage, from a pricing perspective on other goods Caymanians need?

Mr. Speaker, I will refer to Page 10 of the Honourable Premier's speech, in paragraph 4, where he says: **"But Mr. Speaker, let me be clear about something. If this cooperation does not continue to our satisfaction and Government is of the view that the only way to properly protect consumers would be to institute price controls..."** (wow!) **"... then it should be understood that we will do so."** Words of the Honourable Premier of this administration.

He goes on to say, **"Mr. Speaker, just as fuel is a necessity, so is affordable housing."** Is he suggesting that [for] anything that is a necessity for

the people, he is willing to do price control? He needs to clarify that to the people of this country; who knows, we might need it, but I know that the business community may not be too happy about that.

Moving on, Mr. Speak, the Premier also spoke about community policing and I am assuming that when we get down to Finance Committee we will be talking about the number of officers they have highlighted they will have in the communities because up to now, I have not seen a list of where these community officers will be placed. I think it is an important factor that all Members of this House would want to know, because before I was elected to this honourable House, I heard the Member for East End and the Honourable Opposition Leader, the Member for North Side, talk about community officers — in different wording — many, many times; on the radio, in Parliament, on TV and they could not get them.

I find it interesting that it is attractive now, after crime has reached a level where we need them; it is becoming attractive now that *they* are saying it. It was not attractive when the Opposition Leader or the Member for East End was saying it — but again, Mr. Speaker, I am learning very quickly that politics is in full swing and like my colleague, the Member for Newlands highlighted earlier, you do not have to like me, that is fine. Many Members of the current administration were not happy when I won, just as they were not happy when he won; but the members of the George Town Central constituency sent me here to ensure... There is a reason why they chose me over Marco, because there is also a question about his qualifications over mine but the same—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: —Delivery and holding to accountability is what they wanted. There is a reason why the outcome of this election was the way it was, why no group of a party had the majority; because they were not singing the right songs. Now, some may say, *Well, we never got it done*. When I say "we", I am talking about the Independents, but that is another conversation for another day, maybe on another platform.

Mr. Speaker, I am really concerned that what I heard and noted, in respect to the Government's plan with the money that they are receiving by way of revenues to government, seems to be much of the same old, same old, same old. I cannot say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I am confident, because the thing about words on paper is that they are free. Anybody can write something down; anybody can say anything, and, Mr. Speaker, maybe this is a word of knowledge for myself, it is interesting to know why the debate is not after we have gone to Finance Committee, because the details that are necessary in respect of the spending amounts, and all the money that the Gov-

ernment is going to be spending on behalf of the people, are in this book.

Of course, the budget is here, but I must give credit to the Ministry of Finance's civil servants who have given me much assistance in trying to understand this; but even they have admitted there are many details in here that I cannot get answers to until I get the opportunity to question about the multi-million they are spending; where it is going, who it is for, what department exactly it is in; so even if I wanted to give much credit to this administration, I could not because the details are not in this book. All there is is a bunch of numbers and the questions I need to ask, I will not be able to ask until Finance Committee.

As a matter of fact, speaking of which, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a good time for me to go over the Annual Plan and Estimates (AP&E) in respect to the work permit fees. I know that my colleagues have highlighted the increase in work permit fees and, just for reference sake, for the listening and viewing audience, in 2016-2017, when we had an 18-month Budget, the Government made \$99.7 million in work permits, so if you did that, in comparison to one year, you would have to divide that into three and come up to about \$66 million so basically per year, about \$66 million, government made on work permit fees. Now, the projections for 2018, one year, have increased by \$4 million, so they are now going to make \$70 million on work permit fees, so the assumption can only be made that they are going to increase work permits.

I use that and refer back to another area of the Plan and Estimates, which has to do with social welfare, and which blows my mind, Mr. Speaker, because we always hear that when the economy is doing better, when there are more work permits, there are more jobs for Caymanians; however, for that same year while the work permits are increasing, their projections for Poor Relief Payments — which we know when people are having a hard time, they go to get poor relief — is increasing by almost 25 per cent from 950 to 1,200 people. Basically, based on trends, that department is saying to this Government that more and more Caymanians are coming for assistance with food, light, water, rent, child care — whatever you can think about, they are coming to government for more help and they need more money to help them. Yet the Government sells to the people of this country that when we have more work permits, Caymanians get more opportunities. I am no scientist, Mr. Speaker, but that equation does not make sense to me.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn to page... and by the way, just for reference, if anybody who is listening or watching via TV wants to know where the transfer payment for poor relief is at, it is on page 288 of the Annual Plan and Estimates (AP&E) which is online because the Government, particularly the Ministry of Finance, is very proficient; so I would suggest to the people of the country, if you truly want a full under-

standing of where the Government is at, and project where we are going, have a look at these figures because some interesting things come up when you see how the numbers go up and down.

I now want to turn to page 336 on the AP&E chart sheet, Mr. Speaker. I am no economist; when I went to UCCI and got my degree, I actually wanted to do accounting. I did a one year certificate in Accounting first, to try to get myself into an Associate Degree and by the time I got to my Associate Degree I changed my mind, but I do have the foundation and principles of accounting down. I was looking through the cash flows, and based on page 336 in the AP&E, the Government is going to make a lot of money, and after they pay all their operating activities, they are going to be left with over \$113 million. I am trying to keep it as simple as possible because if I complicate it, I will confuse people — right? After they start to spend on projects they want to do to make themselves look good, we are going to be at a negative of \$6 million. That does not make sense to me.

The other interesting part, Mr. Speaker, is that they have not put one drop or one dollar in our rainy-day account. You want to sell to the people the surplus we have, and then you are going to spend every cent of it? Not only are you going to spend all of it, but not enough of it is going to education. The projection is that they are going to overspend by \$6.1 million. Unless someone wants to clarify it to me, they are going to overspend by \$6.1 million even though they have made a surplus, and even though they are overspending, they are not putting any away. I do not understand how that works — how can you project to overspend by \$6 million? You are going to be in the negative once you finish spending? Mr. Speaker, Finance Committee is coming up and they have every opportunity to clarify or counteract what I said.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on now to another area I thought was interesting: "Housing Assistance". The Transfer Payments for persons who were assisted in an 18-month budget — in 2016-2017 it was twelve persons. We are moving to a one-year budget and the estimates have gone up 100 per cent within less time; because the first time it was 18 months and it was 12, and now we are going to one year and it is 24 months and if you disbelieve me, Mr. Speaker, look on Page 290 under TP 60 — Housing Assistance. Projections in 2018-2019 have moved up from 12 to 24, and in the last budget cycle, which was 18 months, it was 12. Another signal that there are more people who are in need of this, so we need more money to assist them. This administration is going to talk about how good we are going to do, but we are projecting that more people will need [help].

Children and Family Services Support: this amount stayed exactly the same and one would assume, based on how successful this administration... which I notice nobody said anything when my colleague said the PPM-led administration. That is exact-

ly what many people are calling you because nobody is yet to define what the Unity Government means. I am expecting to hear [from] Capt. Eugene, Mr. Bernie Bush—

The Speaker: Honourable Member, in referring to other Members, you need to refer to their constituencies.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologise. Learning curves, as I go.

I am expecting to hear the Member for West Bay North, the Member for West Bay Central, the Member for Prospect, the Member for Bodden Town East highlight the parts of this budget they campaigned on. It is the only way it can be a Unity Government — whereby everybody gets a little something for what they campaigned on; otherwise, Mr. Speaker, we are going to have a PPM-led administration yet again.

What is the difference, Mr. Speaker? I question and ask the people of this country to question themselves: Is “Unity Government” just a name, or are there actions? Because in my view, if the Members from the constituencies I just highlighted do not get their part in there, Mr. Speaker, if their only agenda is the Progressives’ Agenda, they are going to have some trouble in 2021.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you cannot make those kinds of assumptions.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will move on.

I just heard the Honourable Premier say he cannot wait to get up; I am assuming he is coming after me, but he also advised me in my earlier tenure in politics, before I was elected to this honourable House. He said, “Kenneth Bryan, politics is the art of war,” so I assume that is what he is talking about because he basically just said he will deal with me when he gets up; but that is a part of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I apologise. I am a little distracted with respect to what my focus is. Something that stood out to me not only in this budget Statement, but in the previous Strategic Policy Statement (SPS), is that there seems to be a bit of an attack on the Conservation Bill. I want to say this cautiously, Mr. Speaker: I agree there needs to be a bit of a balance, but I want to make this Government aware that there are many people who care tremendously about the environment who feel an attack coming on the protection of the environment.

I appreciate the environment and want to protect my environment. My Manifesto says I will protect the environment. I ask the Government to be very cautious in their wording, because many people are starting to feel that they are being abandoned in protecting the environment and if I have to be the sole

lone ranger in that protection, then so be it, but we cannot go too far left, after we were too far right. There needs to be a balance, so I hope and am not suggesting that the Government will, but we all know, Mr. Speaker, the words you choose may sound a bit different than what your intentions are, so I will highlight that, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, it concerns me that the Government... I guess it is not concerning, but I am worried about how it is going to play out. I am excited that the Government has chosen to continue with the annual Christmas clean-up plan but, Mr. Speaker, we all have to acknowledge that it is a little different now with respect to single member constituencies.

I remember other districts’ complaints in the last Christmas clean-up, whereby we heard that George Town got more than West Bay or West Bay got more than Bodden Town, et cetera. I must say I am well aware, Mr. Speaker, that I am the sole person who is not a part of that administration in George Town and George Town Central. I am comfortable saying there are many people in my constituency who look forward to that Christmas clean-up because there are many of them unemployed in my area.

I want to put it on public record now that I want to ensure there is a proper and balanced approach so that each constituency, all 19 of them, have their fair share of workers, whatever number of workers the Government intends to employ. Everybody, in every constituency, has unemployed persons who look forward to the Christmas clean-up. I am aware that sometimes it was not too balanced in the previous clean-ups, Mr. Speaker, and I am not going to allow politics to harm my George Town Central constituents.

Mr. Speaker, on page 3 [of the Budget Policy Statement] the Premier said: **“Today, as we have done these past four years, we are again presenting a responsible but ambitious budget that not only meets the requirements of the Public Management and Finance Law, but also advances the Government’s Agenda, which I set out in my Strategic Policy Statement... this past August.”**

My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that I am not sure if all Members of the current Government would agree about what happened in the past four years. He keeps referring to the past four years and if I remember correctly, those Members who made up with his Government right now campaigned about him and his administration, so I am concerned whether the Members who are now part of his administration are now in support of what he did in the last four years, because I remember quite clearly that in the campaign, not many people were so happy.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, leave the campaign behind and stick to the budget — The Budget. You have talked much about the campaign and I have given you some leeway, but I don't think you should base your speech on it and certainly not on this.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, I will ask you to ask the Honourable Premier to keep his comments until it is time for his rebuttal; otherwise, I will be saying some things he does not want anyone else to hear either.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Government's intention by way of what the Independent Member for Prospect—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Premier just said under his breath that I am going to see a side of him other people have never seen before, and you did not say anything about it.

To me, Mr. Speaker, that is a political threat and it is what I am having to deal with right now for my constituents, because the Honourable Premier does not want me to get any further, because of past history. I do not think it appropriate for him to say under his breath and I think the records of this House should show he just said that.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, just to explain to you: as I said yesterday, Members say things while they are not called upon, as I said [earlier] yesterday, and we do not record those things. There is banter back and forth and we give way to light moments at times, but I do not take notice of all that is said. If that was so then most of the time, the Member who is talking to you right now, I would have to put him out.

[Laughter]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Leave me out of it.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, with your permission.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

POINT OF ELUCIDATION

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: I just wish to clarify something: Initially I was trying to make a light moment because the Member has spent, I do not know how many days, begging me to let him come

and join the Government, so I was saying to him, if the Government is so bad, I do not know why he wants to join it. That is all I was trying to say.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, is it my time?

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you only have two hours, you know. I would advise you to deal with the things you need to deal with most.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, maybe if the Honourable Premier accepted me as a part of his Government he might have a stronger Government; however, Mr. Speaker, we will see in 2021 whether or not his Government is strong. I just hope and pray that the Independent Members I respect so much keep strong. I must say I am proud of the Member for Prospect for showing his boldness today.

The Speaker: You said so already.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: I want to say it again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that the Government's hope to get Caymanians jobs is missing three key elements:

First, the enforcement arm for the Labour problem that we have in this country; I did not hear enough from the Strategic Budget Statement in respect to what this administration is going to do about that.

One of the reasons Caymanians are not getting the opportunities is that people who are willing to violate this country's Immigration Laws are currently getting away with it and the attitude out there is, *Well, Immigration is not going to do anything about it.* I can recall a time, even though I am a youngster, Mr. Speaker, when the likes of the Honourable Deputy Governor or the great OC (Orrett Connor) were a part of the Immigration Department; none of that foolishness went on.

It was a major part of the— sorry, Mr. Speaker. If I keep referring to the campaign, I am only doing so with respect to what people were saying was good for the country because, in my view, what they were saying then and what they are doing now, Mr. Speaker, are two different things. Through the campaign, everybody was saying more enforcement, more enforcement, more enforcement. I am almost certain, Mr. Speaker, that if I check the videos and debates, every single Member in this Government and the Opposition said more enforcement in Immigration was necessary yet, Mr. Speaker, I do not see it reflected here.

I hope that this administration will be able to clarify this when it comes to the budget. I know we have many more police officers and I am happy about that and I congratulate the Government for it, because crime is a very serious problem; but the protection of

opportunities for Caymanians to survive and get food in their mouth and pay for their bills and take care of their children is just as important as crime when considering that it is your life and survival.

The second element that I think is missing is the understanding of the things that need to be done in order to help those who we consider as unskilled or need training or abilities to get a job in the job market.

Mr. Speaker, the Councillor for the Premier, the Member for Prospect, did a very good job in clarifying the Government's position on their plans and hopes to reform opportunities for Caymanian employment; I commend him. There is an element missing though, that I did not hear, and I am hoping he is going to be bold enough to talk to the Honourable Premier, because it falls under his Ministry. There is a concept that we are using and selling now, and that is that we are going to find the Caymanians that need to be upskilled and allow them to have the training opportunities to upskill themselves to put them out there in the workforce; that is all well and good. That is good! That is one part of it, but while we are training them, how are they going to eat? Where are they going live? God forbid if they have children. Who will pay for the light? Who will pay for the water and buy groceries for them? Is that reflected in this budget, Mr. Speaker?

What I am saying, Mr. Speaker is, yes, I know and my information comes from the UK directly. I have to say that I am married to a lovely English lady and I get the privilege of going over and investigating their type of politics and their social welfare system all the time. If you are going to go and train up yourself, what the [UK] Government does is say, "while you are out there training, the Government is going to pay for your food and your light because you need to live."

The reason people are not taking advantage of the training opportunities they are saying are available is because *they cannot afford* to take advantage of them. How am I supposed to take three months off from living and working without income? Unless we are also willing to say, *Listen, while you are training, here is a stipend because at this particular moment, the Needs Assessment Unit does not pay you for going out to train.* What I am expecting the Government to say is, *Okay, currently the Needs Assessment Unit's protocol is that when you are getting a grant, if you are not working, you have to prove to the department that you are registered at the NWDA in order to get services.*

My suggestion, Mr. Speaker, is for the Government to say if they are enrolled in these particular lists of government programmes, they can get assistance as well; and whichever programmes are listed by the government, are going to be those which the Government has identified the particular person needs to upskill themselves. It is going to be hard to expect for the Caymanian who is already limited in their skill-set to decide to go to a training programme and they

cannot eat, unless they have the luxury of having a parent or a loved one at home who is willing to provide for them for that period of time of training. For any skill set in this country, it is going to take the person at least three months, so that is another element that is missing in the employment solution for Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, I know Members of this House have probably heard of a potential Motion I want to bring to the House, but I am not going to speak about it because it is not a Motion until it is seconded by another Member. I have heard other persons offer up solutions with respect to the scope of this discussion, and I even heard one by the Member of the Government itself, namely the Member for Prospect, so I must be allowed to offer a solution.

My solution would be, I guess, the third section of the employment element that is missing, which I do not think the Government has recognised. There are a number of reasons why Caymanians are not getting the opportunities here because we all know it is not because there are not enough jobs. There are more jobs in Cayman than Caymanians, so there have to be other reasons for the unemployment number being (I do not want to be quoted on this) about 5.5 per cent now, I think, and going up.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: 4.2 per cent and is expected to rise next year — thank you. Now, there are a number of reasons why persons are unemployed:

1. They just don't want to work — and every country has that segment of people. With those persons, there needs to be much community and parenting support to get them motivated to want to do something;
2. People who need to be upskilled and retrained and retooled; the Government has outlined there are a number of programmes, though the Honourable Premier did not list them in his Statement. He said there were loads of them, but he would not list them. I guess in Finance Committee I will ask for a list of every one of them, because there are so many I am unaware of. Those persons can join those training programmes to get upskilled; and
3. Persons who are being undermined in the labour market for malicious reasons by malicious employers; Caymanians who, in most people's view, are qualified or certified, who you think can do the job, but for some reason, (in most cases because of money) do not get the job — so how do we address that?

That brings me to the potential Motion I would like to bring to the House in the future. It needs a few tweaks, Mr. Speaker, and I need to convince more

Members of the reasoning behind it to support it; but as it is not a Motion yet, I can't talk about it. Instead, let us talk about the recommendation I plan to make to the House, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Basically, the recommendation is that the Government creates a national job criteria list, and for persons who have not heard of this concept yet, the theory is quite simple: currently in the Cayman Islands, when a person gets a job, the job and its criteria or qualifications for that post are determined by the employer. The employer is the person who outlines what criteria you need to have in order to get that job and logically speaking, you would say to yourself, *Well, of course, the employer should have a major input*, but if an employer has an Agenda... A malicious employer, now, because there are a number of great employers and by all means, any business people who are watching or listening to this, if you are a good business person, we are not talking about you.

The majority of the business owners in this country are good people. It is the bad business employers who are causing that 4.2 per cent of unemployed Caymanians, and I am speaking about them. Going back to the concept of the malicious employer; if a malicious employer, who has no intentions of hiring a Caymanian, is in control of the criteria that it takes to get any post they are hiring for, if they do not want the Caymanian, they can make up *any criteria* they want and then tell the Immigration Board or the Staffing Plan Board that the Caymanian "did not meet the criteria". If they are always in control of the necessary criteria, they will ultimately always outdo the Caymanian from getting the chance and the opportunity.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, my suggestion was that we create a national career criteria list and how we do this is by having stakeholders, business people from the various different industries go through every job in this country from entry level to middle management — and I will explain why I stopped at middle management a little later on. Every job from entry level to middle management, to create criteria based on stakeholders' opinions and those stakeholders would be the business community, Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Association, what we call the Labour Department now, but soon to be Human Resources Department and Immigration.

We all sit and create a select committee like what has been proposed before and go through each particular post and we list out the criteria. This will allow a balanced approach for what is expected of a Caymanian. We would then know whenever we hear situations where a person says that an Associate's degree in Biochemical is needed in order to pump

gas, and they can then justify it by saying that the person has to be around chemicals. We know that a person does not need to have a degree in Biochemicals to pump gas, but right now the control is in the hands of the employer. If the control gets into the hands of a malicious employer, it is very damaging for any Caymanian's [chances] to get an opportunity because we know there are some employers who see "cheap labour" as an advantage to them because we all know, Mr. Speaker, that if salaries are not the second, it is the third-highest expense for any business. It is the one that most businesses tackle when they are trying to downsize or control or increase their profitability. Get the cheapest amount of labour you possibly can.

There is a theory out there right now, Mr. Speaker, that Cayman is addicted to cheap labour, and it is the major cause of the high unemployment in this country. I think the cost of living is also a contributor to the high unemployment, but Mr. Speaker, my concept was simple in respect to saying that there has to be other input involved in what the criteria are going to be for any one person to get a job outside of the employer alone because, unfortunately, there are some malicious employers who would do anything to undermine a Caymanian; hence the reason we are getting these tailor-made posts and causing a Caymanian to never get the job.

However, when I bring that suggestion to the House, I will have more clarity on it if I have kind of confused anybody... because it is a complicated matter, but one that I think most people, once they hear the full details of it and understand the mechanisms of hiring in this country and the work permit system and the Business Staffing Plan system, will understand that my principles and my arguments are on point. I just heard from the Honourable Opposition Leader that we plan to bring Motions to the House that will fix it, as long as the Government is smart enough to support it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some good things, and when I speak about this, I am going to be bringing up the Minister for Financial Services; a very honourable, virtuous woman by the way. I must say.

In respect to the Government's agreement to increase the promotion of Financial Services because, in my view, it was underfunded in the last administration. I know that the Minister in charge of this area is a fighter and would have fought in Cabinet for her fair share to take care of the Ministry she is in charge of, so I want to give my full support and respect to that. There were other areas that I was rather surprised about, and wanted to give my full support to, but because the Honourable Premier has me on edge, I cannot even find the good ones for him.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, I turn now to page 5. In Paragraph 3 it says: “**So in this budget we have provided an additional \$9.6M to cover special education; the enhancement of science, literacy and math; as well as skills upgrading for 400 teachers and assistants; and for scholarships and youth programmes and additional teachers.**”

Now, Mr. Speaker, based on their cash flow, I saw they only had \$71-plus million, and I sympathise—and here I am being nice to the Premier, even though he is out to get me, Mr. Speaker. I sympathise with him to try to balance getting a number of things done across the whole government with the surplus that he has, but I still do not think that \$9.6 million is enough to justify saying that the top priority for this administration is Education!

Mr. Speaker, there is one thing that has been bothering me for some time that I hope this administration could give me an answer to in their responses. Why did we build the moratorium first?

The Speaker: The what?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: The Hall. Sorry! The Auditorium — thank you, Member.

The High School gymnasium. I still cannot seem to understand why we spent the money on that first. The children do not learn in there. The examinations are held there! Great! That's fine. They could have examinations in the UCCI Hall. There are many halls around here where they could have examinations. I really hope they can give clarity to that because now we are struggling to tell the people of George Town and George Town Central [that] they will not have a complete High School until the end of this term, and sometimes it is a political strategy, you know. Give them what they want at the very last so we can say, *Boy, we gave it to you.*

It is a political strategy; I know about it because I was there when the talks happened, Mr. Speaker. Get the things they do not like out of the way first and then get the things they want done at the end of the administration while the people of George Town suffer without a high school. You tell me, Mr. Speaker. Can the Government say *why* they would build the gymnasium first, when the classrooms are where this country's children are learning?!

Mr. Speaker, these are questions that the answers to should only come from this administration. I apologise because there are other Members who were not a part of that decision who are now on the Government side. Please excuse them from that line of questioning.

I do not believe, Mr. Speaker, that \$9.6 million out of... forgive me, Mr. Speaker, let me quote exactly how much money they have, so I do not misquote

myself here, but, as far as I recall, it was close to \$100 million or \$74 million I think it was, that they would use for... no, not there. I beg your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker how much time do I have, sir?

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you have just about one hour left.

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker that is a whole lot of talking.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, the amount I was quoting was \$74 million, from which the Government can do their stuff; that they can say, *Well, this is what we did.* That is the figure they are going to use for this coming year to say, *These are all the things we did in 2018.* That is what will happen in 2021. *In 2018, we did all this* and that is that \$74 million; and out of that \$74 million, Mr. Speaker, \$9.6 million is going to Education, when this Administration is going to claim that education is their top priority?

I do not know who they are talking to, but they are not talking to the people of the Cayman Islands, because if it was their TOP priority, that figure would be a whole lot higher. I will give them this, Mr. Speaker; they hired a very smart, intelligent man to be the head of the Education Counsel, Mr. Dan Scott; if the Administration follows his lead and his recommendations, they have my full support in education. I can bet you one thing, when practical solutions are presented, they may not be accepted but, let me stay in the line of my scope of the debate, Mr. Speaker, because I see a little head now and then that keeps me in line. For the public that is watching, Mr. Bush is giving me good guidance — the Honourable Speaker, I apologise.

Mr. Speaker, I see that some Members are trying to get me named, but there is an ongoing bet of who is going to be named first and I think the odds are in favour of the honourable Member for East End.

Mr. Speaker, I would like also to give congratulations to the administration. Now, as you can see, Mr. Speaker, I am giving credit and some criticism at the same time. I want to give this administration credit for highlighting the fact that they want to maintain seniors for employment in security areas for the Administration Building. I think it is something that the past administration could stay and get good credit for because they were talking about it from then and it has transferred now into this administration so I think The Progressives can strongly accept that one as their own.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to commend the administration on their commitment to policing. I think it is long overdue and I would like to say that I think that much of the coastal protection concept that has

been adopted by this administration came from me. I was the first candidate in the last campaign who spoke about a radar system and soon after that, not even two weeks later, I heard The Progressives saying it as well, so I think that The Progressives may have sneaked that one away but, ultimately, the most important thing is that the people of the country get the benefit of it; it does not matter where the credit goes, so I am glad to see that they have taken that on because it is a very high-cost deliverable that is necessary.

I see that they have given the commitment to the Police Department and they plan to transform our attitude of policing to a concept of its own Coast Guard. I find that there might be some difficulties in that, because it is currently managed under the Governor, and how that is going to work, but I give them my full support. If there is anything I can do in respect of assistance, I am here, though I slightly doubt that they will be reaching over to ask for my help.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to give credit to the Minister of Home Affairs and Financial Services in respect to her travels to sell the Financial Services. I know I mentioned this before, but I was so pleased; I do not like to bring up my wife for anything on the Floor of the House, but we were driving to drop the kids off at school one day and we heard the Honourable Minister of Financial Services speaking on the radio. I think it was just coming back from the EU [European Union] in Brussels and, my wife being in the financial services, having to go through the current CI-MA [Cayman Islands Monetary Authority] audits for the information between all the companies, and it is a bit of a hassle for most of the businesses. They have to get themselves compliant, and everyone is running around and it is quite an annoying thing for all the companies, but they have to get it done.

What led me to understand what the Minister was doing so well was when she said — and that was the first time I heard an Elected Member succinctly say it sweet and short about what needs to be done in the promotion of the Cayman Islands Financial Services, that we are not a tax haven. She said that she spoke the language of Finance and of a common man all in one term and why was she not the Minister for Financial Services before. She got what I meant, Mr. Speaker; I wanted to give her credit in respect of that because there is much talk about her good work in that department.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Well, I hope, Mr. Speaker, that she does not get into any trouble from the Leader of the Government for that. We heard from the financial services industry leaders that we need to start selling our product in the international market better, and I think she is doing a good job in respect to selling it in the appropriate way and giving truth to it. Obvi-

ously, she is going to need money to go out and sell it because, like any other marketing in the world, it is going to be costly. We market everything else, such as our tourism products, and spend millions of dollars on it. Financial services being our number one industry, I am glad to see that she fought for the budget for it. I am going to move on from her because they are going to think that I am in love with her in a second.

Let us talk about the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. This is another area that I do not think the Government spent much time talking about. The current attitude of the administration is that they are going to get the economy strong and booming, and then Caymanians are going to have jobs and Caymanians will be able to live. Mr. Speaker, there are some people who have jobs now and still cannot live because they are not addressing the cost of living. The Honourable Premier was not in the room when I spoke about his “nuclear option” in respect of price control, so maybe it is time for me to reiterate it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: I am glad you heard, sir.

I think that we have to take a serious, serious, look at ways to reduce the cost of living. The current plan, admitted by the leader of the current administration, is, *We just do not want to increase it*. There are people who cannot live on the level it is at now; so just maintaining it where it is at is not good enough.

Because this administration cannot tell the business community to increase their workers' salaries, maybe you can influence the increase in civil servants' salaries — which you need to do too; you need to pay them more. They work hard. I give the Honourable Deputy Governor credit. I attended a presentation by him the other day, and he and Mrs. Gloria Nixon-McField are doing an amazing job. Keep up the good work. Civil servants, keep fighting hard. You are doing well, no matter what they say.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: Mr. Speaker, we seriously have to have a look at reducing the cost of living. If the Government does not have a solution for that, being one of the top five issues in this country, they are not going to succeed in these four years.

I want to go on record today because I promise this administration, with the Lord's help, if He brings me to 2021 and the cost of living is not down, I am going to take the same recording and play it in 2021, Mr. Speaker! If the Government needs the help of the Opposition Members in finding a solution to bring down the cost of living, we will be happy to help — but they have not come up with one because they have not presented one, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: You see, if you had accepted me on your side, of your Government you might have had the solution by now.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan: You can tell them when you get up, Honourable Premier. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the Honourable Premier of your earlier statement when you opened this honourable House, with respect to interruptions, sir, because I am being interrupted by the Honourable Premier in respect to my focus on my debate.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, I found it rather hypocritical of the Government to give you credit for establishing a local honour system a while back. They are giving you credit for it now; but, Mr. Speaker, when you were in charge, and you tried to do it, they said so much about it being vote-buying this and vote-buying that. Anyway, it is pointless to say a good idea is a good idea regardless of when it comes, but too bad you could not get the credit for it. I want to give you credit now that it was your idea.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want this to be purely a time of fighting with the administration. I have reached out to the administration numerous times to be reasonable [and] I know colleagues over here have tried to do so [as well] but, sadly, politics is being played all *the time*. Unfortunately, the nature of the beast you see now is because of the actions of another. I will not allow this administration to just allow me to phase out into whispers and be quiet for four years to say, *Oh, Mr. Bryan did not do anything*. If they are not willing to work with me, then they are going to have to deal with me; either one.

Mr. Speaker, I must say I am really impressed with the Elected Member for Prospect. His ability to determine his support for his administration but not agreeing with a particular part shows maturity — a characteristic of a true Independent. I hope he does not have to suffer as a result of that bold move, but it is exactly what a government is supposed to be able to do; work together, but still be able to disagree. I have not seen much of that. The last person who tried did not make it through. I give him all the credit he deserves.

I hope that empathy alone is not what this Government is planning to do because, as I started out my speech, Mr. Speaker, I said empathy is only understanding what people go through. I think all of us in here understand what most people in this country are going through and whether we are willing to do something about it is a different story.

I know each and every one of us in here, Mr. Speaker, have people come and call every day. Sometimes, it gets so overwhelming that you do not even answer your phone. Sometimes other things get in the way of you doing the right thing, so Mr. Speak-

er, I know one thing: when they do not call them back, I will.

Mr. Speaker, I hope this administration will do everything in its power to really help the average Caymanian with the difficulties they are facing, which mostly have to do with money. Money is the key element running this country right now; the lack of it or the greed of it. It is causing our communities to divide; it is causing crime, and it is even causing us to lose our Christian heritage.

Before I wrap up, I want to share an experience with you, Mr. Speaker. I know of a successful business person who is not from the Cayman Islands but has become a Caymanian over the last twenty years — a successful person with millions of dollars. He and I got into a conversation about Caymanians and some that do not want to work and some who are not schooled and trained well enough and all that, and he expressed how frustrated he is because when he started his business, he truly wanted to commit to the Cayman Islands. He fell in love, like most people usually do who come and talk about the lovely community and the very loving people, and who are willing to talk to everybody so they truly buy in. After a while, they get frustrated by giving one or two chances and they kind of give up and fall into this other attitude of going ahead and playing the system, hiring someone from somewhere else and because of the lack of enforcement here, they can get away with it.

Mr. Speaker, I had to express to him and ask: *How much money have you spent in the Cayman Islands?* He said, *Kenneth, to be honest, just over \$9 million, but I plan to spend some more.* I said, *Boy, that is a lot of money; are you planning to pass it on to your children?* He said, *Well, that is who I am working for.* I said, *Good. I want you to think about this for a second...* (I do not want his name, so I am just going to say "him"). I said, *If you do not do your social commitment and your part to make sure that those are not getting, at least have an opportunity to get, by way of employment, your children are not going to have anything to get, because our society is going to change to a world that businesses are not going to be attracted to come here.* When we are overloaded with crime, *all that money he spent* will disappear and be of no more use to him. For example, nobody is going to want to come to Camana Bay if the murder rate in the Cayman Islands has skyrocketed or the burglaries or robberies have gone out of the loop.

Mr. Speaker, the reason crime increased so much in the last forty years is that every single year our protecting Caymanians and their opportunities in business, survival, and employment get looser. If you do not protect it, the natural course of life and survival take place. I ask a father, any father out there, what would you do if after trying and trying again to do the right thing, you have your children hungry. What would you do when they start crying saying they are hungry? When you think about that, then you will un-

derstand what our lack of focus on our social commitment is going to do to this country in the long term. Again, this statement says “empathy”. People do not want empathy anymore; empathy means I understand what you are going through. *I do not want you to understand – I want you to do something about it!*

Mr. Speaker, the most difficult thing for me as an Independent Member is when people come to me and say, *Kenneth, you are elected now; help me out with a job* and still, do not have the power that these gentlemen do, in respect of making the right decisions to ensure the employment market is more conducive for Caymanians to get a chance. They are the ones who have to increase the enforcement. They are the ones who have to stop all these work permits; not us, Mr. Speaker. We can stand here day in and day out and criticise their control of policies and decisions in this country. Even if we bring a Motion to change it, they can still deny it or, like the Opposition Leader said, accept it for political purposes and make it look good and then shelve it, because it has happened before. It has happened before, when it gets to that stage of, *Well boy, we cannot deny this one, you know, because too many people are looking*; it is accepted but shoved in the corner and it never comes into effect.

Mr. Speaker, I beg on your conscience for this administration. Remember what you were going through for the campaign because campaign time is that one time when we really connect with the people. We go into the neighbourhoods and hear the cries — really sit and actually listen, and through that time, our emotions are running. Once the election is done, we start to slowly fade off that campaign feel and we get into the political mode of *Boy, I need to get something done, and I have to sacrifice this and I have to sacrifice that*. If you go back to that feeling, and by all means, Mr. Speaker, I am not trying to identify any particular person, remember the responsibility that you have when you are on that side because you are in control of decisions that change the lives of the Caymanian People. I am asking you to please remember it. Every four years it is the same thing. I do not want 2021 to come and have the people say, *Well, it is the same old thing*. Can we not be bold enough this time around to say, *Let us take this thing by the horns and truly change it?*

Members of this House may remember when I opened with the Honourable Premier’s Statement. People thought I wanted to try to jump over to the Government because I was saying so many good things. I was really hoping, by his statement and his attitude to say, *I want to leave it all on the table*. I really thought there was going to be a major shake-up. I really felt that it was happening, but that feeling is starting to deteriorate because politics are starting to play again, Mr. Speaker.

Please, I am asking this administration, do not let 2021 come and we have not done anything other

than the same old, same old. Nothing I have seen in this statement jumps out at me to say *Wow!* Nothing, Mr. Speaker! Is more of the same old and in 2021, the people will be crying about the same thing, except there will be more of them. In 2021, I may not be here, but Caymanians will still be.

Mr. Speaker, may God bless this country and its people, particularly those in George Town Central. We have a job to do; remember God is watching.

Thank you so much.

[Desk thumping]

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

The Member for George Town South.

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly, Elected Member for George Town South: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and privilege to stand tonight and contribute to the debate on the Governor’s Throne Speech, the Premier’s budget Policy Statement and the Minister for Finance and Economic Development 2018-2019 Budget, as the Elected Member for George Town South and as Councillor to the Ministry responsible for Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands.

Although I stand here as the representative for George Town South, which represents a very wide cross-section of our Caymanian population, giving voice to their aspirations and needs, I also stand here to look out for the interests of the Cayman Islands and all those who call these islands home.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that our Government will begin talks with Her Excellency the Governor, Helen Kilpatrick, CB and Her Majesty’s Government on the establishment of a Police Authority to help create new approaches in fostering accountability and enhancing the responsiveness to the people’s concerns about crime. I am also happy that the Governor and the UK are willing to discuss the issue. This, if and when it comes to pass, will be an important innovation in law enforcement. For too long, legislators have faced the concern that the people who elect them expect Elected Members to have a say regarding policing, but in practise, this is not the case.

I would also venture to say that, as good governance falls to the Governor and the UK, they must accept that good governance cannot be had without considering the input from the representatives of the people. We are in the 21st Century, Mr. Speaker, and we must have a 21st Century relationship with the UK, that allows some devolved authority over internal security, that can provide better outcomes for our people.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to see that the United Kingdom will be assisting us with our border control in the future. This has also been an issue for a

long time. This new approach to safety will definitely be another avenue for employment, particularly for our young people. The Cayman Islands have a long history of maritime involvement; as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, our Coat of Arms says, **“He Hath Founded it Upon the Seas.”**

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, the Honourable Roy McTaggart, on his first budget for this Government of National Unity and for him as Minister of Finance and Economic Development; the first ever two-year budget for these Islands. I would also like to congratulate him for presenting it in terms that the ordinary person can understand, and for its brevity. I am particularly pleased that the Honourable Minister has stated that he intends to continue to support and ensure that there are substantial operating surpluses each year [with] no new fees or taxes levied on the public and no new borrowings, apart from refinancing an element of the 2019 Bond. Mr. Speaker, by abiding by these guiding principles, this will be working to secure our long-term financial position and maintain compliance with the Framework for Fiscal Responsibility (FFR), as set out in the Public Management and Finance Law (PMFL).

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that the only real independence is financial independence, so we must ensure that we do not only have a balanced budget with surpluses that allow us to maintain healthy cash reserves, but that we comply with all the required ratios and tests that satisfy all the principles of responsible financial management required by law. Without this, we not only risk our financial independence, but we will also lose our ability to control our budget without oversight from the UK.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister is also speaking my language when he says that a strong emphasis will be placed on what is being delivered, rather than just what we plan to do. We must ensure that we deliver on our promises to the People; they will hold us accountable for the promises we made to them. The Premier, in his Strategic Policy Statement, noted his intention to ensure that we create and sustain a consistent and constant culture of delivery. I will be alongside him every step of the way to ensure that we deliver on our promises. Four years may seem long, but it will pass quickly, so action is what is needed.

The Cayman Islands, Mr. Speaker, is a service-based economy, a large part of which is knowledge-based. Implicit in this is the fact that we must have well-educated and highly skilled people. We must not have a country that is the fifth-largest financial centre in the world or is one of the major tourism centres in the region, renowned for quality tourism and not have in place the necessary education and training to provide opportunities for our people to participate in this success story.

I join with the Premier in saying to parents and young people that we need to, once again, embrace

the trades as being good jobs for Caymanians and indeed, good Caymanians jobs. Many of our fathers and mothers worked in all areas of hospitality or as masons or mechanics or even, yes, as nurses and teachers. These were jobs that, along with seafaring, helped build our Islands in years gone by; so as the Government, we will provide educational opportunities for young people that will allow them to move into careers of their choice whether as a banker, accountant, lawyer or, equally important, as an air conditioner mechanic, chef or working as a lab technician. The jobs available in Cayman today are many and varied. We just need to expand the horizons of our young people and provide the right educational environment to help them blossom.

Mr. Speaker, turning to the Premier's budget Policy Statement, suitably entitled “Stability, Empathy, Prosperity – A Plan for Sustainable Social and Economic Development”. Every concern the Premier mentioned also concerns me, as a Member of this Honourable House, although a very new one. I was happy to hear the Premier's plan to tackle the significant issues facing this country. I will work hard to assist wherever I can in addressing and solving these issues; however, in my Budget Address I will speak to particular matters which I am committed to improving and enhancing.

Mr. Speaker, the last Progressives-led government has indeed given the current administration an excellent platform, both in terms of strong, sustainable economic growth and the return to fiscal stability; we will indeed use that platform to tackle the significant issues facing this country. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, this is a new Government of National Unity, voted in by the Electorate to represent its concerns. I want to be a part of the solution to the concerns expressed by the people of George Town South and, indeed, the whole Cayman Islands.

I was pleased to see that in both the Premier's budget Policy Statement and in the Minister of Finance's Address, there was a heavy emphasis on dealing with the social issues of our country. Point in fact, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that civil servants who spent many years in the civil service and are now retired with minimal pension, will receive financial assistance to bring them on par with the Veterans, Seafarers and those Caymanians in need who receive financial assistance. With many of these folks being elderly, in many cases the money they receive monthly makes a big difference in their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, this is one way of helping reduce poverty in accordance with the United Nations Millennial Goals; but there is an issue that has been brought to my attention and needs to be addressed, and I know that others in this honourable House have heard the same complaint. Too many of these individuals do not always benefit from these payments. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? It is because there is abuse in the system, and this needs to be corrected. Abuse that allows

family members or others to access the funds paid to the intended beneficiaries, leaving these needy persons with little, if anything, of the amount paid by the Government.

A system needs to be established to properly monitor the use of these funds to ensure that these ex-gratia payments fully benefit the intended beneficiary. Now that we have a Council for Older Persons, it is hoped that this is one issue that they will look at to see how best this problem can be fixed. Indeed, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that the newly appointed Council sees this as part of their remit. In making these ex-gratia payments, we must ensure that the helpmate or spouse of our Seamen is not ignored, forgotten, and left in dire poverty.

Our Constitution recognises the contribution of these women when it states in the Preamble, at Page 13, that the People of the Cayman Islands affirm their intention to be “a Country that honours and acknowledges the important contribution of Caymanian women who, during the absence of the seafaring men of the Islands, managed the affairs of their homes, businesses and communities, and passed on the values and traditions of the Islands’ people.”

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said that this is a Government with ambition. Like him, I too have those same ambitions for my country and my people. This is why I am happy to see that this budget is investing in, and giving priority to improving the range of services provided to our people.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has also said that this administration will prioritise education and I totally support him on this. He has emphasised that this budget directs resources to raise our game in all aspects of education, technical and vocational education training, and continuing to drive up academic standards in our schools. Education and youth are areas that have always held my interest and they are very close to my heart. Many aspects of my campaign were focused on positively affecting the youth of our country and my interest in strengthening our education system, and I am truly pleased that these are my areas of focus for the next three and a half years. Our young people are, without doubt, the future of these islands, and I am looking forward to being a part of furthering their education, growth and development.

Education is the catalyst for growth in any society and I take the responsibility to empower our current students to leave our education system on a path to becoming successful future leaders and contributors to our society very seriously. It is this passion for young people and education that made me request to work in that Ministry, and I want to publicly state my appreciation to the Honourable Premier and the Honourable Minister of Education for this opportunity. It has been challenging but really satisfying and rewarding.

Mr. Speaker, since my appointment as Councillor for Education a short five months ago, I have

had the privilege of assisting the Minister by attending and participating in various school-leaving ceremonies and graduations, visiting the Sunrise Adult Training Centre, attending the Feed Our Future Fundraiser, reading to the children of George Town, East End and Savannah Primary Schools. Attending and speaking at the RUBIS Top-Student Award Ceremony among other visits and events. Attending those events has allowed me to hit the ground running in terms of being fully informed in what is happening with the education in our Islands and to obtain some direct insights into the strength of our system, the talent of our students and some of the gaps we face on a daily basis.

On some of those visits to the schools, I received insight into the day-to-day operations and accumulated first-hand knowledge of some of the needs of our system. There are a number of programmes that were previously implemented that work towards meeting these needs, and I am happy to support their continued implementation: Mathematics Recovery, which is an approach to intervention for students who are struggling in Mathematics, which focuses on improving the maths performance of students at the primary level. The roll-out of the Reading Recovery intervention, which focuses on improving literacy performance for year three students who are struggling, and the training of interventionists to focus on a Science Strategy, which would enable targeted science education and empower future careers and technical and vocational areas.

There are three interventions, which include individual support for our students with special learning needs, to ensure that they do not fall behind on their progress: the response to intervention for Year One and Year Two students, which helps to close reading achievement gaps at some of our earliest stages. The Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support, or PBIS programme, aims to create positive school climates through a student-driven culture of positive ideals. Each school was responsible for determining its individual ideals, which govern their behaviours on a day-to-day basis. This aims to resolve behavioural issues from the inside out instead of through a punishment-based framework.

Professional development for teachers: helping to ensure that our educators receive training that is both useful and consistent with international standards. Increased focus on technical and vocational education, through increased offerings of courses at the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre (CIFEC). These initiatives are based on our own specific needs and supported by international best practise and need to be given the resources and opportunity to fully flourish for the benefit of those in our system.

While there are always areas for improvement, I will not advocate change for change's sake, as my concern is, and always will be, about what is in the best interest of our children and our country. To this end, there are areas that I am personally interested in,

on which I will focus my energy. The foundation upon which students begin their early journey is of utmost importance; I am therefore seeking to support the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Unit in its remit of serving our youngest learners. For the first time in our history, early childhood education has become a part of the Education Law and the ECCE Unit, therefore, will have legislative teeth to regulate and develop ECCE Centres. I will support their continued work offering various training to ECCE Centres to develop their expertise, such as support in implementing inclusive practises and other ways to support any children with special learning needs and any other skills necessary to build a strong foundation for all children to commence the compulsory education level.

This Unit's budget also allows for a secondment post. The focus of such secondment would be on working with parents. Parents are their children's first teachers, and this secondment would work to establish a parent strategy for both the centres and the Ministry. Its aim is to improve the relationship with parents by improving parent involvement and supporting PTAs, which can help improve parent involvement and maintain the connection with parents long term. I will ensure this post is filled to allow this goal to be achieved. This leads me to my second focus, which is parental involvement at all levels.

A strong foundation is not just limited to a strong educational foundation in the setting of an educational institution; it also extends to the home. We know that many students encounter numerous barriers to learning that originate in the home. These are usually the result of the lack of parental involvement and supervision. Students first learn from their parents, and continue to do so at all ages. It is therefore my goal to focus on ways to improve communication between schools and parents and guardians, and to stimulate an interest in education by uninvolved parents.

My third area of focus is something I hope we can tie into every school's Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support or PBIS culture – taking pride in yourself. We often get caught in dialogue as regards to students disobeying dress codes or wearing their uniforms incorrectly. I believe that this is a larger issue than just dress codes. Our students have not all been taught the correlation between self-respect, taking pride in oneself, and the way you are perceived by others. I believe, therefore, that until we start changing their behaviour in this regard, and changing the culture around it, we will continue to beat this proverbial “dead horse”. It is therefore my goal to implement an additional PBIS ideal that is consistent across all government schools, which is specific to respecting oneself, one's school and the clothing which identifies which school they attend at all times.

My fourth area of focus is one that is personal to me, which is that healthy bodies promote healthy minds. A policy for standards for food provision was

rolled out to all schools to ensure that healthy, wholesome foods are served to students daily.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being invited to eat lunch at the John Gray High School cafeteria a few months ago and was impressed by the healthy menu offered to the students. There was a salad bar that could compete with any of the local supermarkets and that I would choose to eat at any day. I was amazed by all the students who were waiting to be served salad; so, you see, Mr. Speaker, we are on our way to healthy bodies and healthy minds, but it is going to take time. We just have to keep educating our students from an early age, starting from home.

All students do not, however, take advantage of these food options, and I believe that this is an extension of my previous point about students taking pride in themselves. Many students know what foods they like but are not fully aware of the impact that eating a healthy, balanced diet every day has on their physical bodies. Neither are they aware that it will help them keep in shape and also keep up their respective sports. In addition, this will improve their cognitive abilities, leading to improvements in grades and other classroom outcomes. Inspiring a self-driven goal to treat their bodies well is a goal I hope to achieve during my time in this role.

My fifth area of focus that I am passionate about is promoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training or TVET and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths or STEM-related education and pathways to employment. Firstly, I am pleased with offerings and increasing offerings in TVET courses available at the Cayman Islands Further Education Centre and hope that we can continue to add even more relevant Level-3 courses to the repertoire at CIFEC. The uptake on the courses currently offered is significant, and there are even more areas that our students could be given access to at this level.

Additionally, I would like to commend the partnership between CIFEC and the Public Works Department to offer the apprenticeship programme, so that teenagers can spend eight months working alongside master technicians in plumbing, electrical installations, air conditioning, painting and carpentry, so as to learn practical skills in these areas while working towards accumulating industry-recognised qualifications. Expertise in these areas is always in high demand, and these young people are surely investing in their future by obtaining this knowledge. It is my intention to inspire and motivate other partnerships whether via other public or private entities to offer similar apprenticeship and/or training opportunities.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the pinning ceremony for the students in the Nursing Program at UCCI and it gives me great pride to announce that the first cohort of this programme will graduate from UCCI this evening. I am very pleased that the previous administration, through UCCI, added this much-needed area of study to UCCI's offerings, and I

will continue to support this programme and others at UCCI. These qualifications will never be rendered obsolete; in good times and in bad, there will *always* be a need for health care and thus for nursing. The partnership between the Government, UCCI, and representatives from the hospitality industry to also offer the School of Hospitality Studies is one that is of special benefit to our large tourism-driven economy.

We often hear that visitors come to our Islands and rarely interact with our local people, and this programme is helping to put Caymanians back in the hospitality industry, which is certainly booming and brimming with employment opportunities. I commend this partnership, and plan to get more involved with the hope of helping to advance more tourism-based practical training and internship opportunities for our young people.

Mr. Speaker, once we are educating and training our young Caymanians to a high standard, it will be incumbent on businesses to provide them with opportunities for employment, and so I will support this Government's initiatives to improve the efficiency of and also the transparency of the work permit system. We need guest workers to assist us in growing and keeping our economy strong, but we also need to ensure that our own local people who are capable, willing and able to perform a job have the first opportunity for that job.

I have had times in my life, Mr. Speaker, when I have been unemployed, so I understand well how it feels to make calls and respond to advertisements over and over again and I know well how relieved I was when I was again employed; hence the reason I say that I intend to work hard to ensure that our young people who work hard, get qualified and who display the right attitudes and work ethics have real opportunities for jobs in our country.

Speaking of our young people, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words on the subject area of youth in the Cayman Islands. I have been passionate about youth affairs because, like most of us do, I believe that they truly are our future. I have noted, as many of us have, the social issues and challenges that can cause a number of our young Caymanians to lose their way and fail in their quest to play an active part in our national development.

Mr. Speaker, as the Councillor responsible for Youth, one of the first areas that I will be focusing on is the National Youth Policy, which is the guiding document that the Ministry will use to support and enhance youth development in the Cayman Islands. While an implementation plan for this policy was drafted some years ago under a previous administration, it was never operationalised. The Ministry will therefore be focusing on a review of the National Youth Policy, the implementation plan, and the various measures and indicators, so that the development and delivery of programmes by youth associations

continues to be relevant and in line with the strategic direction of the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry, working through the Youth Services Unit, will continue to empower our young people and the work of strengthening those organisations and entities that provide services for the youth of these Islands. In order to further support the work of the Youth Services Unit, the Ministry will seek to develop supporting legislation that includes the requirement for organisations to provide youth-related data, which will allow the Ministry to make data-driven decisions on youth-related matters.

Mr. Speaker, while our youth have had a number of successes, including our young chefs' great achievement at CARIFESTA, we believe that the stronger the youth service providers, the better they will function. The Ministry, through the Youth Services Unit, will seek to improve accountability of those youth service providers that receive funding from the Ministry and assist providers with capacity building by conducting leadership workshops. The Youth Services Unit will continue to provide safe and supervised environments where youth can gather and work out their own world view such as the weekly Financial Awareness Now (FAN) Club and the annual summer camps; the Cayman Islands Youth Assembly (CIYA) and the weekly radio show, Youth Flex.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands Cadet Corp will continue to be utilised as a youth development tool. The Cadet Corp, which moved into their new headquarters in April this year, is investigating the possibility of assessing suitable Crown Land, perhaps in the East, to construct an assault-course training area that will help in providing suitable opportunities for youth development in an appropriate environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will also be seeking to review and update the Cadet Corp Law (2016 Revision) and develop supporting regulations to ensure alignment with relevant existing laws and the strategic direction of the Ministry. There have been some challenges in recruitment and retention of Cadets in recent times. As part of a strategy to increase recruitment and retention, the Cadet Corp will be working to revive its presence in Cayman Brac and to establish new school-based detachments here in Grand Cayman. The Cadet Corp will also be seeking to develop working relationships and linkages with other uniform branches of Government as part of this strategy. Mr. Speaker, through the work of the Youth Services Unit and the Cadet Corp, the Ministry will continue to support and enhance youth development and reduce crime and the fear of crime within the Cayman Islands.

The Premier previously stated that this Government is committed to a target of at least 75 per cent of high school graduates moving on to post-secondary education or training by the end of this administration.

The Ministry, with the support of Cabinet, has put in place a National Training Council comprised of relevant industry bodies and stakeholders to focus on the development of a National Technical and Vocational Education and Training or TVET system. Two areas the National Training Council is currently focusing on are the completion of a TVET Policy Review that includes research related to the progression pathways from high school through further education, and a review of the career counselling provision in relation to TVET.

The Speaker: Honourable Member for George Town South, how much longer do you think you have?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Quite a bit? Do you want to complete tomorrow morning? Are you at a point where you can break?

Ms. Barbara E. Conolly: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Honourable Premier?

ADJOURNMENT

Honourable Premier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, Friday, 3rd of November.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do now adjourn until 10 o'clock, Friday morning, 3rd November 2017.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

At 9:15 pm the House stood adjourned until 10 o'clock Friday, 3rd November 2017.