



PARLIAMENT
OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

THIRD MEETING OF THE 2025-2026 SESSION

Sixth Sitting

Thursday
11 December, 2025
(Pages 1-57)

Hon. D. Ezzard Miller
Speaker

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PRESENT WERE:

Hon. D. Ezzard Miller
Speaker

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister of Financial Services & Commerce
Hon. Gary B. Ruddy, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of Tourism & Trade Development
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP	Minister of Health, Environment & Sustainability
Hon. Rolston M. Anglin, JP, MP	Minister of Finance & Economic Development <i>and</i> Education & Training
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, MP	Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP	Minister of Social Development & Innovation <i>and</i> Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage
Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, JP, MP	Minister of District Administration & Home Affairs
Hon. Michael S. Myles, MP	Minister of Caymanian Employment & Immigration

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Mrs. Julie J. T. Hunter, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay West
Ms. Heather D. Boddan, OCI, Cert. Hon., JP, MP	Elected Member for Savannah

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town North
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> , Elected Member for George Town Central
Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	Elected Member for George Town East
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP	Elected Member for Cayman Brac East

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, CCI, JP, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town East
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West

APOLOGIES

Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP	Elected Member for Newlands
Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Elected Member for George Town West
Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Cert. Hon., MP	Elected Member for Red Bay

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
THIRD MEETING OF THE 2025-2026 SESSION
THURSDAY
11 DECEMBER, 2025
10:03 AM
Sixth Sitting

[Hon. D. Ezzard Miller, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: Good morning. I invite the Member for George Town East to say prayers.

PRAYERS

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning colleagues.

Let us pray:

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

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

Let us say The Lord's Prayer together:

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

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Parliament is now called to order.

ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OR AFFIRMATIONS

The Speaker: None.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Deferred]

The Speaker: I call on the Premier to move a motion.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister of Financial Services and Commerce, Elected Member for West Bay South: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to move a motion under Standing Order 20 that item number three, Reading by The Honourable Speaker of Messages and Announcements, be deferred until 2pm today.

The Speaker: The question is that item three on the Order Paper, Reading by The Honourable Speaker of Messages and Announcements, be deferred until 2pm.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Item three deferred until 2pm.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

**Cayman Islands Stock Exchange – Report for the
Fiscal Year Ending 31 December 2024**

The Speaker: Just before I call on the Premier, I have apologies from the Member for Red Bay and the Member for George Town West for being absent today.

Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Stock Exchange – Report for the Fiscal Year Ending 31 December 2024.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak to the Report?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Report is self-explanatory.

**Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands –
2024 Annual Report – Excellence & Innovation in
Aviation Regulation - Fiscal Year Ended
31 December 2024**

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Cayman Islands – 2024 Annual Report – Excellence & Innovation in Aviation Regulation - Fiscal Year Ended 31 December 2024.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Report is self-explanatory.

I should have also said this for the Stock Exchange that I thank them; and also the Civil Aviation Authority for their hard work.

**Government of the Cayman Islands – Ministry of
Health, Sports, Youth & Culture (Formerly Ministry
of Health, Environment, Youth, Sports & Culture) -
Annual Financial Statements for the Year Ended
30 June 2014**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, Minister of Health, Environment & Sustainability, Elected Member for West Bay Central: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June, 2024 for the Ministry of Health, Sports, Youth and Culture.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Yes, Mr. Speaker, briefly on this and the other reports that I would be tabling right after.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to table these reports from the fiscal years 2013-2014 through to 2015-2016, and the Annual Reports with accompanying Financial

Statements for the Ministry of Health for 2016-2017 through to 2018-2019.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to advise this honourable House on the status of the Ministry of Health's audits and annual reports for the financial years 2020 through 2024. The Ministry of Health has prepared and submitted its annual financial statements for each of these years, 2020 through 2024, to the Office of the Auditor General for audit in accordance with the statutory deadline of the end of February following each financial year.

However, Mr. Speaker, while the financial statements have been prepared and submitted for audit, their tabling is subject to the completion and formal sign off of the audits by the Office of the Auditor General. This is a necessary prerequisite for the inclusion of the audited financial statements in the Ministry's annual reports and for their subsequent tabling in this honourable House. The Ministry of Health now operating as part of the Ministry of Health, Environment and Sustainability under the Cayman Islands Government's organisational structure effective 1st July, 2025, continues to treat the completion of these outstanding audits as a priority and continues to work collaboratively with the Office of the Auditor General to support the completion of the audits.

The Ministry is actively engaging with the Office of the Auditor General to develop an expedited plan for the completion of the outstanding audits and is fully committed to restoring the regular cycle of annual audits and ensuring that the reporting remains current and timely moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, once the audits for the years 2020 through 2024 have been completed and signed off by the Office of the Auditor General, the Ministry will then finalise the reports for tabling in this honourable House. The Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to transparency, accountability and continued collaboration with the Office of the Auditor General.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Government of the Cayman Islands – Ministry of
Home Affairs, Health & Culture – Health & Culture
(Formerly Ministry of Health, Sports, Youth &
Culture) - Annual Financial Statements for the
Year Ended 30 June 2015**

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June, 2015 for the Ministry of Home Affairs, Health and Culture.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: No, Mr. Speaker, just what I said earlier.

Thank you.

Government of the Cayman Islands – Ministry of Home Affairs, Health & Culture – Health & Culture (Formerly Ministry of Health, Sports, Youth & Culture) - Annual Financial Statements for the Year Ended 30 June 2016

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 30th June, 2016 for the Ministry of Home Affairs, Health and Culture.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture & Housing – 2016-17 Financial Year

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House the 2016 to 2017 Financial Year Annual Report for the Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture & Housing – Cayman Islands Government – Annual Report 2018 – *Health & Well-being for all in the Cayman Islands*

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Annual Report for 2018 for the Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing. Thank you.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: No, sir.

Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture & Housing – Financial Year 2019

The Speaker: Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Financial Report for 2019 for the Ministry of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing.

Also, to say that I'm happy to take them off of the Ministry's desk and lay them here in Parliament.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Office of the Auditor General Cayman Islands - Improving Financial Accountability and Transparency: Long-Term Financial Sustainability (February 2025)

Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Office of the Auditor General - Improving Financial Accountability and Transparency: Long-Term Financial Sustainability (February 2025)

The Speaker: Chairman of the Standing Public Accounts Committee, elected Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence as well, if you'd allow me to go ahead and lay the Report of the Public Accounts Committee that accompanies the Report of the Auditor General at the same time.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable Parliament, the Report of the Office of the Auditor General Cayman Islands entitled Improving Financial Accountability and Transparency: Long-Term Financial Sustainability (February 2025); together with the Report of the Standing Public Accounts Committee on the Report of the Office of the Auditor General Cayman Islands - Improving Financial Accountability and Transparency: Long-Term Financial Sustainability (February 2025).

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the honourable Chairman wish to speak thereto?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: No, Mr. Speaker, other than to commend the Report to this honourable House for them to read at their leisure. Thank you, sir.

Cayman Maritime – Annual Report - January–December 2023 - Maritime Authority of the Cayman Islands (MACI)

**Cayman Maritime – Annual Report - January–
December 2024 - Maritime Authority of the
Cayman Islands (MACI)**

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

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

With your permission, I'd also like to [table] the 2024 Report for the same Authority.

The Speaker: So ordered.

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

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Cayman Islands Maritime Authority – Annual Report for the year January to December 2023 and the Annual Report for January to December 2024.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Premier wish to speak thereto?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Only to thank the Maritime Authority for their efforts, innovation and talented staff.

**Cayman Islands Government – Unaudited
Quarterly Financial Report – Nine-month Period
Ended 30 September 2025 - Core Government**

The Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Finance & Economic Development *and* Education & Training is not here.

Honourable Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Cayman Islands Government – Unaudited Quarterly Financial Report – Nine-month Period Ended 30 September 2025 - Core Government.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Honourable Minister wish to speak thereto?

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: No, Mr. Speaker.

URGENT QUESTIONS

The Speaker: None.

**QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS
OF THE GOVERNMENT**

The Speaker: None.

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS
OF THE GOVERNMENT**

The Speaker: None.

**OBITUARY AND OTHER
CEREMONIAL SPEECHES**

The Speaker: None.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker: None.

RAISING OF MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: None.

OTHER BUSINESS

The Speaker: None.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

SECOND READINGS

**IMMIGRATION (TRANSITION) (AMENDMENT AND
VALIDATION) BILL, 2025
(Continuation of debate)**

The Speaker: Does any honourable Member wish to speak?

Minister of Social Development & Innovation *and* Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in respect of this honourable Parliament and in recognition of the protocols that guide our proceedings. I acknowledge all my colleagues here today who have come prepared to debate, and who have already debated, on a matter that touches every Caymanian household: the question of immigration, its impact, and its future direction.

I speak not only as a Member of the Government, but also as the elected Member for East End, a district where the Caymanian spirit runs deep, where the stories of our seafaring fathers, our mothers, and our families still shape who we are. I also speak as the Minister responsible for two people-centred portfolios — Social Development & Innovation *and* Youth, Sports,

Culture & Heritage. Portfolios that give me a daily window into the hopes, challenges, and aspirations of our people.

My contribution today reflects how these proposed reforms intersect with the priorities and responsibilities of my own Ministries, and how they support broader national objectives tied to people, opportunity, digital transformation, cultural identity, and public trust. All priorities shared by the NCFC [National Coalition for Caymanians] and the Cayman Islands Government's strategic outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, during my campaign like everyone else in this honourable House, I have been clear: I wholeheartedly support balanced immigration reforms — at every campaign meeting it was one of my topics.

For many years, Caymanians have expressed concerns about displacement, competition for jobs, the rising cost of living, and the fast pace of population growth. These worries are not imagined, they are lived realities and they deserve a responsible and meaningful legislative response, Mr. Speaker. However, our approach must be thoughtful, practical, and aimed at strengthening, not disadvantaging, the very people we are seeking to protect.

Even as we confront these realities Mr. Speaker, we must reflect honestly on our Caymanian heritage. From our ancestors to present-day Caymanians, many have travelled beyond these Islands to seek opportunity — and my colleague from Bodden Town East mentioned that yesterday in his debate. They worked throughout the region and the world to build better lives for their families. That history teaches us humility. It reminds us that the issue is not immigration itself, it is how we manage it. Balanced reform means creating an immigration system that is structured, fair, and sustainable. A system that protects Caymanians, while also treating those who come here to work with dignity and respect. It means building a framework that strengthens opportunities, enhances clarity, and reinforces public trust, Mr. Speaker.

Another truth that we must say plainly if we are to speak honestly is us being responsible leaders. Mr. Speaker, the reality of our modern economy is that it functions through the combined efforts of Caymanians and those who join us to work in various essential sectors. Their contributions, particularly in areas where local capacity is still developing, are an important part of our national progress. From the frontline workers who care for our elderly and children, to the specialised professionals we urgently need like doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, cyber security analysts, engineers and technologists. They are an important part of the Caymanian story and this is not about us versus them, Mr. Speaker, this is about stability and the only sustainable path forward for a small nation with a global economy.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a moment in our history where our population exceeds 89,000, with more than half being non-Caymanian. Our economic success has

brought tremendous growth, but that growth has also brought pressures on housing, infrastructure, schools, social services, and most importantly, on our Caymanians confidence in their very own future.

Many Caymanians feel as though they are becoming outsiders in their own country. They see competition for jobs, rising rents, and a pace of population growth that feels unsustainable. They want reassurance that their country values them, sees them, and protects their place within it. We should not dismiss these feelings, Mr. Speaker, they should not be minimised at all. We must acknowledge and address them.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill helps create that reassurance. It aims to bring order where there is uncertainty, consistency where there have been gaps, and fairness where systems have drifted from their original intent.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands' unique cultural heritage and identity are inseparable from its people. As we navigate modernisation, economic expansion, and global pressures, it becomes essential to prioritise immigration reform that protects the interests and opportunities of Caymanians.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Across our Islands, Caymanians have voiced concerns that the current immigration system, as it has evolved over the last two decades, has sometimes left them feeling displaced or overlooked; and that the influx of foreign workers, while important to our economy, has at times created real competition: for jobs, housing, and essential resources. This has threatened the very fabric of the Caymanian society.

Therefore Mr. Speaker, balanced immigration reform must:

- Ensure fair opportunities for Caymanians by strengthening pathways to employment through job training, apprenticeships, and incentives for businesses to hire local talent.
- Manage population growth responsibly so that the influx of new residents does not surpass the capacity of our society to integrate them sustainably, preserving our cultural identity.
- Protect Caymanian culture by ensuring newcomers learn about our history, our values, and our traditions and by supporting local arts, heritage, and cultural initiatives.
- Streamline immigration processes through reduced bureaucracy, clearer communication, and improved transparency.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of strategic reform are clear:

- Preservation of Caymanian identity and cultural heritage;
- Economic growth that benefits Caymanians, not burdens them;
- Stronger social cohesion among all who call these Islands home;
- Environmental sustainability, as population growth must align with the carrying capacity of our Islands.

The primary stakeholders in this process remain the Caymanian people; then the business owners who should be the foremost beneficiaries as well as employers, and residents who come here seeking opportunity and who share a responsibility to respect and integrate into Caymanian culture.

Mr. Speaker, by prioritising balanced immigration reform, the Cayman Islands can ensure its unique identity is preserved while promoting sustainable economic growth, social cohesion, and long-term national stability.

This legislation also strengthens the confirmation process for Caymanians “as of Right,” ensures stronger mechanisms for job advertising and local recruitment, and introduces greater accountability through annual declarations for specific facilities. It sets clearer expectations for financial responsibility and compliance, and tightens provisions around marriages of convenience and the continuation of RERCs involving Caymanian children.

Importantly, it enhances information sharing across government, allowing agencies to work together with the clarity and coordination required for a modern immigration system. Mr. Speaker, might I add that there are aspects of any immigration reform that must be monitored closely. Balance is not achieved through a single Bill, it is achieved over time through ongoing refinement, data analysis, public input and careful review of any unintended consequences. That is not a criticism, Mr. Speaker, that is responsible governance.

Mr. Speaker, every one of these reforms has a singular purpose: to ensure Caymanians can fully participate in their own economy and society. This includes business owners who face hiring challenges daily. Cayman needs a workforce strategy not only an immigration strategy, Mr. Speaker; and if we want Caymanians to take on more roles across our economy, we must prepare that pipeline, not simply declare it.

Mr. Speaker, in my Ministry, I see the gaps first-hand. In social development we need more care workers, social workers, community development officers, counsellors and family support specialists. In innovation and computer services, we need more cyber security analysts, network engineers, system architects, developers and digital transformation specialists. These are high-demand fields but they are not fields in which Caymanians are yet sufficiently represented at scale. If we want Caymanians in these roles, then gov-

ernment must align scholarships with national workforce needs, support readiness pathways, provide apprenticeships and mentorships, strengthen technical and vocational education, build long-term workforce planning frameworks, and make family life affordable enough that the Caymanian population can grow in a sustainable way.

We cannot speak about population imbalance without speaking about housing. We cannot speak about Caymanian workforce participation without speaking about childcare costs. We cannot speak about Caymanian upward mobility without speaking about professional development. These are all realities and we need to confront them on a much broader [scale].

Thus, Mr. Speaker, immigration reform is not just about controls, it is about capacity building for Caymanians and that is, again, responsible, forward-looking governance and that is aligned with the Government’s broad outcome of strong families, accessible opportunities, and economic stability and national resilience.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Social Development, I have a particular interest in ensuring that our legislation protects Caymanian children. The amendments related to RERC continuation, child support, and parental responsibility are essential. They also create clear expectations for non-Caymanian parents with Caymanian children ensuring that financial responsibility is upheld, that care obligations are met, and that the child’s wellbeing remains paramount; thus, strengthening accountability and ensuring that immigration privileges are not granted at the expense of a child’s wellbeing. This reflects a simple yet profound principle: our laws must safeguard the most vulnerable amongst us.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister [with responsibility] for Innovation, eGovernment and Computer Services, I also want to highlight the important role that modern technology and cross-government collaboration will play in strengthening the immigration framework we are debating today.

Our Ministry, together with the Department of eGovernment, has been working closely with the Ministry of Caymanian Employment & Immigration and with WORC to ensure that immigration reform is supported by the right digital infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, a modern immigration system cannot function effectively without secure identity solutions, reliable data, and efficient pathways for verification. WORC must become the authoritative source of truth for immigration status in this country — not only for work permit holders, but for all persons with status in the Islands, including Caymanians as of right. Through eGovernment’s interoperability [solutions], we are building the capacity to share immigration status securely across agencies, reducing duplication, delays, and uncertainty for the public.

Mr. Speaker, this is where the National eID becomes transformational. We are encouraged that the

eID will be issued as an identification card for work permit holders as required under section 71 of the current Immigration Act, and that it will create a trusted, verifiable way for individuals to confirm their identity and immigration status digitally. The eID will allow people to:

- Display and prove their immigration status instantly;
- Access services using authenticated, secure digital credentials;
- Verify personal information without physical documents;
- Use verified digital signatures for official transactions.

Over time, in alignment with eID rollout efforts, this is a significant step forward for all residents who desire — Caymanians, permanent residents, and work permit holders alike. For Government and the private sector, the eID will confirm clearly, the person's identity, and display WORC's data as a single source of truth for all immigration statuses, enabling efficient processing, reducing administrative burden, and strengthening compliance and enforcement. Mr. Speaker, I know that is one of the troubling situations Caymanians have faced. Every job they apply for, every opportunity they get, they have to prove they are Caymanian.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the introduction of the National eID will create a single reliable source of truth for identity and immigration status.

Mr. Speaker, through secure data-sharing frameworks and interoperability solutions, eGovernment is building a modern infrastructure. This is not abstract innovation, this is practical, meaningful, everyday improvement.

Mr. Speaker, the central question we must ask is whether this Bill strengthens opportunities for Caymanians. I believe it does by creating a more orderly labour market, by enforcing financial responsibility, by enhancing clarity around status, and reducing avenues for system abuse. It encourages businesses to plan responsibly and helps ensure that Caymanians are genuinely considered for available jobs. That said, it must be accompanied by realistic national strategy. We cannot ask Caymanian-owned businesses to hire Caymanians for jobs that Caymanians are not yet trained to do or are not interested in doing. We cannot ask Caymanians to enter fields where scholarships or training pipelines do not exist. We cannot expect population growth to slow, if the cost of living is difficult for young Caymanians to start families. Immigration reform must be complemented by workforce development, scholarship reform, early childhood investment, housing solutions, childcare affordable strategies and continued economic diversification.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: These are matters that the government needs to carefully collaborate on in alignment with the broad outcomes and the NCFC's commitment to coherence, professionalism and public trust.

As Minister of Culture and Heritage, I must emphasise that immigration is not solely an economic issue, it is a cultural one. The Cayman Islands is defined by its character: its warmth, humility, faith, resilience, and deep cultural heritage. These issues are deeply tied to cultural identity. Our immigration framework must strengthen, not strain, these defining traits.

This Bill strengthens the expectation that those who come here should integrate respectfully, understand our culture, contribute positively, and recognise the values that have shaped these Islands for generations.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to affirm fairness within our immigration framework by ensuring that Caymanians have meaningful access to opportunities in their own country. It strengthens the systems that support social harmony and economic participation. It ensures that those who come to work among us can do so within a structure that is transparent, respectful, and aligned with our national priorities. In doing so, it enhances dignity and reinforces the Caymanian social fabric.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this legislation seeks to bring coherence, clarity, and accountability to our immigration system. It addresses national longstanding issues of inconsistency, supports responsible population management, and sets clearer expectations for compliance. Again, this is about ensuring that Caymanians are protected, that our cultural identity remains intact, and that our economy grows in a way that is manageable, transparent, and stable.

As we discuss balance, we must mention that when a person is legitimately married to a Caymanian and has the RERC, if they are not given priority to work it is the Caymanian spouse who suffers and their Caymanian children who suffer. Often then, it is the government, through the Department of Financial Assistance, who has to pick up the slack. We must ensure that we support our Caymanian families to ensure that it's a fiscally responsible commitment that they make.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is not the end of immigration reform. It is a necessary phase, a foundation for further legislative refinement, including the upcoming review of regulations and the permanent residency framework. Our approach must continue to be thoughtful, data-driven, and shaped by the voices and concerns of the Caymanian people. The NCFC supports this philosophy and so does this government.

Well thought out reform today creates sustainable opportunity for tomorrow.

As I begin to wrap up Mr. Speaker, I offer a clarion thought to learning and engagement. As leaders, every single one of us who was elected, our duty is not only to legislate, but to guide, to educate, and to empower. Immigration is complex. It raises deep emotions, and understandably, it raises questions, and it requires a well-informed public.

I encourage every resident, Caymanian and non-Caymanian alike, to read the Bill, review all of the materials, and understand the intent behind these reforms — ask questions, seek guidance, and engage with their MPs. That is how democracy is strengthened; this is how national unity is built.

An informed public is the foundation of a strong democracy, Mr. Speaker, and we must move forward as we consider this thought: If we are to secure a sustainable future, we must design institutions and systems that honour the journey that brought us here, strengthen the stability we need today, and intentionally shape a tomorrow in which every Caymanian and Caymanian business can thrive. That is the essence of responsible governance, and it is the commitment that guides both the NCFC and this government's work as we build a more resilient, equitable, and confident Cayman Islands.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill must support the vision by strengthening fairness, advancing clarity, and ensuring accountability. As we chart the way forward, we must remain steadfast in our duty to preserve a Cayman where Caymanians can continue to prosper socially, culturally, and economically.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, Minister of District Administration & Home Affairs, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the most difficult tasks that I have preparing for Parliament is simply choosing what tie to wear because I don't know if—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Of course you would love the colour today.

I don't know if anyone else recognises it, but a tie shows a person's character. It shows the mood that the person is in, it shows what they are ready for and how they're feeling. When I woke up this morning and decided to look through my myriad of ties in my closet, I was drawn to the yellow, not because of the yellow,

Mr. Speaker — let me make that clear for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition—

[Laughter]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: —but because of the anchors on the tie. I decided to go with this one to honour my grandfather, Captain Harold Banks who dedicated 63 years of his life to the sea and still continues to walk and sail amongst us. Today, this tie is for him.

It also reminds me of why we're here: to continue to keep that anchor secured, Mr. Speaker, and do what we can to secure the future for generations to come. However, just like, I guess, my second difficulty in preparing for this sitting, if I'm being honest with you, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not I'm going to get up and speak, I'll be honest with you. I said, this is the immigration reform that the people have been asking for.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: We don't need to get up and say the same thing over and over again. Thus, I had real difficulty where the Premier even called me yesterday morning and said, *Nickolas, you sure you're not going to speak.* I said, sir, there's no one in their right mind who's going to have any hesitation with this Bill; no objection to this Bill; no abstention from this Bill; no 'No' against this Bill. I don't need to speak.

But Mr. Speaker, like the story of the miraculous divine conception that we are here celebrating this Christmas season, we heard objection yesterday. We heard concerns with inserting a simple word. We heard concerns of sharing of information between government agencies; and I'm sure that further on we may hear further objection. Thus, Mr. Speaker, I found it very pertinent, very important, that I get up and at least say something to cement my support for what this Government is doing in bringing the Immigration Bill and finally putting the Caymanian Protection Act back on our books.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Speaker, I rise today, not as a Member of Parliament alone and Minister, but as a Caymanian — a Caymanian father, a Caymanian whose roots in these Islands run deep. I speak today with conviction because the decisions that we make here in this House will impact not only today's Caymanians, but those not yet born.

Every generation of Caymanians before us has faced its defining test. A moment where they had to choose whether they would stand still or stand up. A moment when they would recognise that the spile *nah* in the stern of the boat and the boat is sinking and they plug it or they sink or swim. This is that moment for us.

Mr. Speaker, another reason why this tie has brought back memories for me, as a young child, I went

on a fishing trip with my uncle and I was tasked with ensuring the boat was prepared for launch when we were going down the ramp. He said, *Nickolas, everything ready?* I said, yeah, come on, come on. Of course, as soon as the boat touched the water, as soon as he got out of the truck to help me out, realised that the spile wasn't put into the boat. We lost all but two of our corned beef and tuna sandwiches that day.

[Laughter]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: We have an opportunity now to recognise that the spile is not in our boat. That all but two of our corned beef sandwiches are done and gone. What are we going to do about it? This is that moment. Do we watch the water continue to flow in fast so that we can bail out or are we going to plug the hole with the spile? That decision is ours.

You see, Mr. Speaker, immigration policy is not just paperwork, it is not process. It is the gatekeeper of national identity, national opportunity and national sustainability; and for too long, that gate has been unmanaged, Mr. Speaker. It has been inconsistent and misaligned with the needs of our people, but we are here to correct that.

Before I speak on the Bill itself, Mr. Speaker, I must acknowledge something very important. During the last administration, before I ever imagined standing here as a Minister, I sat through every presentation given by the Ministry responsible for this area on early drafts of these reforms. I watched the proposals evolved. I watched the ministers and members of that government discuss and debate and decide on a way forward. I watched civil servants, many of whom are here today — the Chief Officer, Mr. Wesley Howell; the Deputy Chief Officer, Ms. Danielle Roberts; a deputy chief officer in that Ministry who is now a deputy chief officer in my Ministry, Ms. Debbie-Ann Whittaker; Ms. Rolna DaCosta who is not related to me, but she's good people, let me just point that out; Mr. Jeremy Scott; Ms. Sian Pairaudeau; all the immigration team in the Ministry or Department of WORC — work diligently, meticulously and with genuine care for Caymanians; and their fingerprints are on every clause of this Bill. To debate, oppose or question the integrity of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is to question their integrity; and I have every drop of faith in the work that they produced.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: We owe them our thanks; and personally, I thank you all.

Mr. Speaker, Caymanians have been signalling the alarm for years, not quietly but loudly, in their homes, on talk shows, in election campaigns which we just came out of, in business meetings all across the three Islands. Our people have created or repeated the same cry, *protect our country, protect our people*; and

I'm sure that will ring a bell in someone's mind. Protect Caymanian opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill is the first serious structured response to that plea in over a decade. In the last 10 years alone, as we've heard earlier, 9,084 persons were granted permanent residency across all categories; 7,098 persons were granted Caymanian status; and, in 2024, 1,518 Caymanian status grants were approved. These aren't small numbers, Mr. Speaker. These are structural shifts in the demographic future of our Islands, and generational Caymanians are now the minority in the Cayman Islands. Without reform, without reform, Mr. Speaker, we risk cementing a future where Caymanians, whether by birth, whether by descent, or by law, no longer have pre-eminence in their homeland. This Bill is how we begin to correct that imbalance.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Speaker, despite what has been said [or] what may be said, this Bill is not radical. This Bill is not extreme. This Bill is certainly not rushed. This Bill is responsible, measured and long overdue. It introduces mechanisms to protect, not just protect us as a people but us as a country for the future. It introduces annual declarations. It introduces stronger financial support that's required. It's not bureaucracy, Mr. Speaker, it is safeguarding Caymanian children. It protects our small businesses and improves workforce integrity. It ensures foreign workers can genuinely support the families they bring rather than shifting that burden on to the taxpayer vis-a-vis the Caymanians.

The information sharing powers, Mr. Speaker, new section 8A. Government agencies including CBC [Customs and Border Control], General Registry, DLP [Department of Labour and Pensions], all of those may legally share necessary information with WORC for accurate assessments. This is long overdue. We cannot continue making immigration decisions, decisions on who comes into this country, who has right to remain in this country, in silos. We must break those silos down.

Mr. Speaker, how this connects to me personally and professionally. As the Minister responsible for Customs and Border Control, I have a unique vantage point. Every day, CBC officers execute the front line responsibilities of immigration control from the airport to the seaport, from asylum matters to visa enforcement to overstaying. I see first-hand the volume of entries, the complexity of cases, the level of fraud and misrepresentation attempted, the capacity challenges, the consequences of weak legislation. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, through that section that there may be concerns about, gives WORC and CBC the tools they need to safeguard Caymanians and this country effectively. It makes our immigration system credible, it makes our immigration system consistent and defensible.

Mr. Speaker, had it not been for my son's Christmas concert last night, I think I would have responded a bit earlier but waking up this morning, again,

I think it was important that we addressed a few things that were said yesterday and perhaps maybe echoed later on.

The first one, Mr. Speaker, is that this Bill was rushed, it was rushed. In September 2023, Mr. Speaker, several billboards were erected across this country. They said in bold letters, “**IMMIGRATION REFORM, NOW! [TO] PROTECT OUR COUNTRY, [TO] PROTECT OUR PEOPLE**”. I certainly agreed with the billboards. We did “need it now” then, and we need it now. If we recognise that the spile is not plugging the boat, Mr. Speaker, why the delay? Why not recognise that this Bill does great work for the people of this country and provides the immigration reform now, that we so rightfully deserve and need. You cannot demand reform now, then cry, *not now*, when the reform is finally brought forward.

We have not had time to review it, Mr. Speaker, we have not had time to read it. Well, Mr. Speaker, the White Paper was published in January 2025, and as we heard the good Minister say, the White Paper that was published in January 2025 makes up 80 per cent of the Bill that is before us today. The public consultation period was open for that entire time on the White Paper, on the Bill that’s before us. The Opposition had access, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition had opportunity. The legal drafting is clear and transparent. There has been more than enough time for review.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Again, I touched on it, Mr. Speaker, the access of information and discomfort with sharing information across government agencies. Mr. Speaker, we cannot celebrate breaking down silos in every other area of government whether it be education, procurement, health, child safeguarding, necessary areas, and then insist on silos in immigration, Mr. Speaker, we can’t do that. The very system, the very system that defines who can live and who can work in this country. If CBC has information relevant to an immigration application, if the General Registry, or the Department of Labour and Pensions, and WORC cannot legally access that information, then we aren’t protecting Caymanians, Mr. Speaker, we are handicapping ourselves. Section 8A in the Bill solves that. This is good governance; this is modern governance; and this is necessary governance.

If we do nothing, Mr. Speaker, Caymanians will continue to be displaced economically, status acquisition will continue without adequate safeguards, job hopping will continue to destabilise our workforce, and dependents will continue to arrive without the financial means to support them. CBC, WORC and other agencies will remain siloed and ineffective. Caymanians will become a shrinking percentage of the country their ancestors built. The cost of inaction, Mr. Speaker, as I said during the budget debate, is not measured in the process, is not measured in the number of applications,

it is not measured, in this instance, in dollars. The cost of inaction is measured in identity, in opportunity for future generations of this country.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, my personal perception and indeed the intent and perception of this Government — this Bill is not anti expat but it is pro Caymanian.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Let me be clear. Cayman has always welcomed people from around the world, but welcoming does not mean surrendering; openness does not mean exposure; and compassion, Mr. Speaker, does not mean chaos. This Bill before us today ensures genuine marriages are respected; Caymanian children are protected; employers have clarity and stability; government agencies can cooperate; and Caymanians have priority in Cayman. It is balance, not backlash at anyone.

Mr. Speaker, again, I touched on it when I rose for the first time, this is a critical juncture, a crossroads if you will. I think about my own children, I think about your children, Mr. Speaker. I think about the young Caymanians walking into classrooms today believing that Cayman still belongs to them. We, Mr. Speaker, Members of this honourable House have a duty, a sacred, historic, moral duty to ensure that when those children, our children, step into adulthood, Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands, these three beloved Cayman Islands, remain a place where they can thrive; not just survive, not just observe the success of others who came after them. Our fore parents handed this country to us in trust, and we must do the same: strengthened, safeguarded and sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say this Bill is not the end of reform. It may not address all that we need to address now, but we need to start plugging that hole. We need to stop accepting sink or swim, we need to begin floating again, and that is what this Bill takes us on the path to do. Finally, some action in taking us there. It is the beginning of restoring balance, Mr. Speaker.

I support this Bill wholeheartedly, Mr. Speaker; and I urge every Member, every Member, to do the same in recognition of all that I said — *for our people, for our culture, for our future, for our children’s future and for these beloved Cayman Islands.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Member for Savannah.

Ms. Heather D. Bodden, Elected Member for Savannah: Mr. Speaker, thank you, sir. I wore my yellow today because I thought I would spread a little sunshine.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

Ms. Heather D. Boddén: Wore it for Mr. Bryan.

Good morning everyone. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my contribution to this Government Motion No. 4 of 2025-2026 *[sic]*.

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today, not just as a proud generational Caymanian, but as a proud elected Member of this honourable Parliament who has witnessed first-hand the struggles and frustrations that so many of us face when it comes to the issue of immigration.

I recall a conversation with a dear friend of mine, a hardworking Caymanian woman who had been struggling for years to find stable work in her own country. Her qualifications were excellent and her desire to contribute was unmatched, yet time and time again, she watched as positions were filled by work permit holders, some of whom were less experienced and less qualified.

This isn't an isolated story, sir, it is the reality for so many Caymanians. Our people who built this nation with their blood, sweat and tears have been left to fight for their rightful place in our own home.

Mr. Speaker, another deeply troubling pattern has emerged in recent years, many Caymanians share that after applying for jobs and even after completing interviews, they never hear another word. They are left in silence without courtesy, without closure and without any understanding of why they were not selected. This practice is not only unprofessional, it is profoundly discouraging. No Caymanian seeking honest work should feel invisible in their own country. Our people deserve transparency, respect and the simple acknowledgement of the efforts to contribute to the workforce of these Islands.

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Heather D. Boddén: Mr. Speaker, I speak today with deep pride in the legacy of the family which I come from. I'm descended from a long line of nation builders, men whose hands quite literally shaped these Islands. My father and uncles were among those who cut and built our roads, cleared the land, built our playgrounds and paved the parks that generations of Caymanians have enjoyed. Their work formed the foundation for modern Cayman Islands. It is because of their labour and the labour of so many like them that those who have come to our shores now find a prosperous community to call home.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves on the verge of something historic. The Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2025 represents not just a reform, but a reset, a landmark moment in our national journey. For years we've heard calls for change, but the political will and the courage to act have been in short supply. This Bill is the beginning of the solution and it is about time. It is past time we stand up for Caymanians and give them the opportunity to succeed and thrive in the country they call home. As

someone who comes from a community that's felt the weight of this issue where young Caymanians can't get a foot in the door, where families are frustrated by the lack of opportunities and our infrastructure is buckling under the pressure of unmanaged population growth, I can speak with a deep understanding of what this Bill means for us. It's not just a matter of policy, it's a matter of our people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, we've arrived at this point because, for far too long we've allowed our immigration system to be reactive instead of proactive. For years we've been living with the consequences of unchecked population growth. I remember when our roads were quieter, our healthcare system was more manageable and our schools were not overcrowded; but today, the reality is that our infrastructure is stretched beyond its limits. The pressure on our environment, our resources and even our sense of community is too great to ignore. We've tried to manage this growth without addressing the root cause, immigration policy, which too often puts the needs of outsiders ahead of the needs of our Caymanians.

The cost of inaction is clear, Mr. Speaker, if we do nothing, we risk losing the very essence of what makes the Cayman Islands special; our culture, our economy and our social cohesion are at stake. We can't afford to let this issue fester any longer. If we continue down the current path, we'll see more of our young people struggling to find meaningful work, more of our communities feeling divided and more of our resources drained. It is not just the economy that will suffer, our national identity and the future of Cayman will be jeopardised because our young university-educated Caymanians will remain away from these Islands, putting their skills and energy into someone else's country.

This is where the reform comes in. This is where the Bill can make all the difference. The moral imperative of this reform is simple. Caymanians must come first.

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Heather D. Boddén: This is not a radical position, it's the right thing to do. Our immigration system has been out of balance for too long and this Bill is designed to correct that balance. We're making sure that Caymanians are given the first opportunity to fill jobs, advance their careers and contribute to our society. That doesn't mean we shut the door to newcomers, it means we prioritise Caymanians while ensuring that the needs of our business community are met in a sustainable and responsible way. It means our government departments need to work more closely together so that the roadside and yard garages are properly vetted, licensed and managed.

From an economic standpoint this reform is about creating a system that supports the needs of our workforce. It's about creating a fairer path for Caymanians to access the jobs that allow them to build stable,

prosperous futures. It's about ensuring that our workforce development aligns with the needs of our local economy. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, if we don't address this imbalance now, the long-term sustainability of our economy can be at risk.

However, this reform isn't just about jobs and the economy, it's also about social cohesion. It's about building a society where everyone, whether Caymanian or expat, has a clear understanding of their place and their role. Our communities are stronger when people respect our values, our culture and our way of life. We are an island nation, small but proud and those who choose to make it their home must do so with the understanding that they are guests in a place with a long history and a strong sense of identity. If you wish to live in Cayman, you must respect Cayman, its culture, its people and its traditions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know there will be concerns. I know some will argue that these reforms will harm our business environment or make it harder for expats to contribute to our society. We will continue to listen to businesses and organisations and engage in legislative changes that respect their views and concerns. It is not about being anti expat, it's about protecting Caymanians and ensuring that we don't lose sight of what truly matters. We can still welcome those who are here to contribute, but we must do so in a way that ensures Caymanians have the opportunities they deserve.

There is common ground here, Mr. Speaker, we all want a prosperous, strong and vibrant Cayman Islands, we all want to see our communities flourish and our economy continue to grow, but that growth must not come at the expense of the Caymanian people.

Looking forward Mr. Speaker, this Bill represents more than just a policy shift, it's a commitment to the future of Caymanians, to ensuring that our young people have the skills and opportunities to succeed in their own homeland, that our communities remain cohesive and supportive and that our economy remains strong and sustainable.

We are at a vital moment in our history and the decisions we make today will shape the future of Cayman for generations and generations to come. Our responsibilities are clear, Mr. Speaker, all Members of the NCFC Government campaigned on immigration reform, and so the time to act is now. We cannot afford to wait any longer, we must stand up for our Caymanians and ensure that their rightful place in this country is protected for years to come. Let us move forward with courage, conviction and a shared commitment to a better future for all.

Mr. Speaker, it is therefore disheartening that in our own Islands, Caymanians can at times be made to feel as though we are the ones intruding. This sentiment is not only misplaced, it undermines the very fabric of our identity.

Even more troubling is the notion that a born generational Caymanian might ever be asked to prove

that he is Caymanian. Such a request is both unreasonable and profoundly disrespectful, particularly when directed at those whose roots run deep into the bedrock of these Islands.

Mr. Speaker, as I close my remarks on this Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, it is a sad indictment on legislators that we're still listening to the disheartening stories from our very own Caymanians who share their stories about having to train foreign workers who are brought in for particular roles that Caymanians could have been hired to do.

Mr. Speaker, I was born and raised in this country and came from the days when we had to be constantly swatting mosquitoes. We had no foreign workers to do what we are now inviting foreign workers to do. I am encouraging all entities and all employers to ensure that every Caymanian is given the first opportunity of employment and advancement in these Islands.

Mr. Speaker, as far as my voice can reach across these Islands, I say to every Caymanian seeking employment, stand confidently in your abilities and in your skills. You are worthy, you deserve a fair and genuine opportunity, not as a favour, but as your rightful place in the land of your birth. Never feel discouraged or diminished, you've earned the right to compete, to advance and to succeed in your own country.

Mr. Speaker, I wish once more to extend my sincere congratulations to Minister Myles for the bold and commendable strides he has made within his first eight months as a Minister; his work reflects conviction, discipline and vision. I also acknowledge the dedication of his capable staff whose commitment has carried this initiative to its present stage. As the Christmas season approaches, I offer them all my warmest wishes for a peaceful and restorative holiday.

Mr. Speaker, these reflections bring me to a difficult but necessary truth, it is because of the sacrifices of Caymanian families that instances of disrespect toward our people are so painful to witness. We have seen occasions where foreign workers arriving in senior positions, including banking and other high-level roles, have treated Caymanian workers dismissively. Such conduct ignores a simple reality: when they arrived, they stepped into a Cayman already built, preserved and elevated by the labour of our people. Anyone who is welcomed to make their home in another man's land carries the responsibility to honour that history and respect the rights and cultural boundaries of those who built it.

For these reasons Mr. Speaker, it is essential that those who choose Cayman as their home, understand the values and traditions that define us. Respect for our laws, our culture and our way of life must never be compromised. We do not ask newcomers to abandon who they are, but we expect that they honour who we are. Cayman has always been welcoming, generous and gracious, but that welcome must never serve as a means to dilute or overshadow the identity of the

people who shape this country. Instead, those who come here should seek to understand our culture, contribute meaningfully to it and help strengthen the community they have joined.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I thank all honourable Members and I commend this Bill to this honourable House.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

[Pause]

Minister of Planning.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in strong support of the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2025, a Bill that goes to the heart of who we are as people, how we grow as a nation and how we safeguard our opportunities for Caymanians today and for the generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, as I sat here yesterday and listened to pretty much everyone's speech, I can almost say everyone is in agreeance that something has to be done. Everyone is in agreeance. Even the public, everywhere you go they are happy to know that this immigration amendment Bill is here, happy to know that our Government has taken it forward, and happy to know that something is being done.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by thanking the Member who was there before too, for bringing the first White Paper from the previous government starting this. It was just time that ran out. As he always loves to say, *some water, and some reap*. A couple of times now he's just been watering and he hasn't been reaping, but he's been setting some of the milestones at least.

Mr. Speaker, more than 650 Caymanians applied for this year's NiCE programme, from 18 years old all the way up to 93 years old — 93 years young I would call them. That number did not shock me, it confirmed what I already knew about our people, which is that Caymanians want to work, they want to contribute, and they want to stand with dignity on their own two feet.

However, Mr. Speaker, NiCE also revealed something else, when hundreds of Caymanians line up for two weeks of seasonal work that is not a reflection of laziness, it is a reflection of a labour market that is still not delivering the access and the opportunities that the people deserve.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Caymanian Employment has been clear, this country must aim higher than temporary programmes alone. NiCE has its place and it has its value and it will always have my support

until we don't have anyone applying for that programme. I would love to get to the day when this Government can say that we ran the NiCE programme but we don't have anyone applying for that programme because we have filtered them into the jobs that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, under this Government NiCE is being used as a bridge, not an end point. A way for people to reconnect with the habit of work and then, through the data shared with the Employment Ministry, a pathway to full-time, meaningful employment.

Mr. Speaker, that brings us precisely to why immigration reform is needed now. When 650 Caymanians stand ready to work that is a signal to all of us in the policy leadership, it tells us we need an immigration system that protects the opportunity for Caymanians, supports proper progression and training, and still provides the structure for responsible access to overseas labour while those gaps exist. NiCE is a system, Mr. Speaker; immigration reform alongside the workforce development and labour reform is part of the cure.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill recognises something that Caymanians have been saying for years, our immigration framework must support national priorities, including food security, housing, infrastructure, transport, education, and public safety, while safeguarding Caymanian identity and ensuring responsible population growth. This Bill advances that objective in several key areas.

Mr. Speaker, let us speak plainly. The most consequential reform in this Bill, to me, relates to granting and management of the Cayman status.

Clause 13 introduces a new validation provision that ensures the legal standing provisions of status and grants, closing certain historic uncertainties that have lingered for too long, which strengthens confidence in the system for those who hold status lawfully and reinforces the integrity of the framework going forward.

Clause 10 [*sic*] amends section 37 to clarify that a person who obtains status through deception, fraud or non-disclosure can have that status revoked through a transparent and legally sound process. Caymanians expect fairness and they also expect accountability; this form delivers both.

Clause 9 strengthens the continuity of requirements for permanent residence applicants ensuring that individuals who seek long-term integration into our society and to truly live amongst us, contribute to our communities and participate meaningfully in Cayman life.

Mr. Speaker, these reforms matter deeply. Immigration is not an isolated system. It connects directly to planning approvals, land use, housing demand, our infrastructure capacity — we see that every day, just trying to get to Parliament on time — the transport flow, the food security and the strain on public assets. If population grows without guard rails, Caymanians feel it first. We feel it first in traffic, housing prices, access to

education and the cost of food; and this Bill provides the tools to manage the growth responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, for example, clause 7 strengthens the framework for work permits by requiring more accurate reporting, better employee employer accountability and deeper scrutiny on repeated permit renewals. This directly supports our construction trades, our training programmes at Public Works, our farming apprenticeships and our efforts to place Caymanians at the centre of our infrastructure workforce.

Mr. Speaker, in agriculture, the connection could not be clearer. Farmers across these Islands rely on timely, seasoned labour. They need clarity, they need predictability; they need a system that supports local food production, especially under national food security and the Food and Nutrition Security Policy. This Bill strengthens the transparency, improves the processing mechanism, and ensures that access to labour where truly required is managed in a way that aligns with the national priorities that help Caymanian farmers, not hinder them.

In housing, Mr. Speaker, the Bill matters just as much. A stable, predictable, immigration framework strengthens our ability to build homes that Caymanians can actually afford. That is the connection, Mr. Speaker, and the significance in the infrastructure and transport. This Bill strengthens the labour framework needed for major national projects including the runway extension, the new arterial road expansion, and the public transport upgrades. Responsible access to labour ensures that these projects stay on schedule, and stronger enforcement ensures that Caymanians are not displaced from jobs they can do and want to do. These reforms strike the right balance and openness where necessary, protecting where required and [ensuring] accountability everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, to illustrate how these reforms support our people, allow me to go back to the NiCE programme again, just once more; not the programme itself, but rather the insight it gave us. Hundreds of Caymanians across every age group stepped forward ready to work. That tells us that Caymanians are available. It tells us that Caymanians are willing, and it tells us that Caymanians are still being overlooked in the areas they could have and should be participating in.

Immigration reform addresses that gap. It strengthens monitoring, it improves the data accuracy, and it increases enforcement where necessary. It supports the labour market conditions that prioritise Caymanians first, while ensuring foreign workers are treated fairly and in accordance with the law. This is how we grow responsibly; this is how we protect our people. This is how we sustain our economy in a way that preserves the Cayman we know and love.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to return to the people who sit at the heart of this debate: the NiCE worker in his 60s willing to clear bush, clean roads, to support his family [and] the young apprentices at Public Works learning to lay blocks, electrical work, and

plumbing work. Solar is something else that we need to look into because we see it as the next market we want to get Caymanians into.

Mr. Speaker, I think probably just about everyone campaigned on immigration reform. I remember standing on the stage and throwing the papers off the stage while telling the people how much we needed to have it done. We had to get it done. Every single person wanted it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty sure this Bill will be supported by every single person in this House. Some may play politics with it, but I'm pretty sure at the end of the day, we have seen it out there; 80 per cent of this Bill is almost the identical Bill that was there before. Some on this side were there for the crafting of it. Some of us are still on this side and we're still going with the crafting of it. Different captains, different ships, different ports; that's all, but we are still going in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that this is something that we do not separate ourselves on. This is something that all politicians need to be unified on. This is not one that we play with back and forth. This is not in the ping pong area. This isn't the pickleball court today. Let's leave that for something else but not this one. Let us not fight back and forth on this. Let us make sure that we work together and we get this right.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen this.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: We've been seeing it on billboards how we need reform for immigration.

An Hon. Member: For years.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Now we are here today. We need to support it.

I've seen that the Member for George Town Central actually had immigration reform on his billboard, so I know the Member for George Town Central supports it. I have no doubt.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I have no doubt. He was probably the first one to publicly come out and say it big and bold. I think it was a little bigger than 10 by 8 or four by eight at the time. I don't know what size his billboard was, but I know he supports it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Isaac said he went there and measured it — 16 by 16.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I ask all colleagues today to support the Member [seated] behind

me, the Member for Prospect. The Member came in for Caymanian employment and hit the ground running. Like politicians do sometimes, he could have gone and restarted the whole thing over, but he said, *you know what, I'm gonna walk with it. I want to see it in. We want to get to that end point*, so he picked up where we left off and continued to roll it, and here we are today.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Yes, sir. I put in some good plugs for you.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Put in some good plugs. I made sure the people know that you fully support it.

I applaud him because sometimes immigration is not one of the best subjects, and you get many people from all sides calling you, threatening you, saying they will put all of this campaign money against you at the next election just to get you out, yet he avoided all the noise and just continued to say, *you know something? I know the focus. I know the mandate I want; the government gave me the mandate and I am going to pick up and continue this because I want to see it delivered*; because he realises, if we continue to push it down [the road] another couple of months, how many more people can enter the gates. Yes, everybody deserves to enter the gates of heaven but not this one.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Not this one. This one is special. This one is very special.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Member for all the hard work and I applaud the Government for taking a stance because I know it's not an easy road. I know the hard work that the team has done behind the scenes with this. God knows that the Chief Officer alone and his team — as you can see, he brought the whole team here today so you know he means business. All the hard work they have been doing and all the work they do behind the scenes [they] finally get to see the reform of this immigration Bill and its direction, I know that they are happy to be here today. They are very happy because much of this work may make their lives much lighter and happier. Mr. Scott, down there in the back; it should help him definitely.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that it's taken very seriously. We could have sat here and said, *you know what, some tweaks need to be done to it, but we'll get to it*. We could have thrown more money at the service and said, *well, let us get more bodies and put them in immigration. Let us put more money into the enforcement team* — which, Minister, I think we need to build the enforcement team up too, so hopefully we do and put them on the road. Matter of fact, you can send them North Side first; start from that direction and

work your way back to town. By the way, everything starts from the best part of heaven and comes back this way.

Mr. Speaker, it is something that we need to take seriously. I see it every day. I get calls every single day from a Caymanian who wants a job, and sometimes you try your all to help him get one and everybody locks the door on him. You could call everyone you know, every friend you know, and ask them to give him a job. Some will get and some people will tell you "I'll get back to you", but we need to stop making excuses.

Mr. Speaker, one thing we need to ensure we don't do is hinder the Caymanians who own their business. We need to make sure because one thing I don't like to see is all the Caymanians working for all the elite. I want to see Caymanians owning the companies and the businesses so —

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: We need to make sure that the path is very clear and open for them in a direction that makes their life easier on how they get their permits too, because they are the ones. If we can make sure that these Caymanians start to own their own businesses, it will ease the strain on the system. My focus has always been that we make more millionaires in the country and we put more Caymanians in the front line and that will always remain my focus to pursue, to see that happen.

Mr. Speaker, just going back a bit on the hiring process. I know there are some who are upset right now, too. Many businesses are upset, too, and saying, *"Boy, they are making it tougher on us right now"*, but we need to tighten up a little before we can start to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I promise them I will be the first one out there championing for them if I see that their businesses start to fail and what we need to do to improve, because all of these live documents always need to be tweaked as we continue to go forward, but they need to be tweaked in the right direction, not leaving the Caymanians behind. They need to be tweaked to push Caymanians forward; and we need to continue to move not only immigration reform but others as well.

Mr. Speaker, recently we came here and saw how much money it actually takes to run this small little place we call the Cayman Islands, which is the centre of heaven. How much money does it take? There are other alternatives we need to [choose from]. We take care of our people, we build strong infrastructure, and we're improving our systems. We want guests to come here and feel comfortable, safe.

Mr. Speaker, I remember three, four years ago, as a matter of fact, I think the Member for George Town Central might have been sitting with me in a restaurant. A movie star was there and no one was actually paying him any mind. Someone introduced us to him and he said no one in this island wanted his autograph or

stopped him and asked for a picture. He said that was just something different for him because [usually] he could barely walk two feet without having to stop for someone asking him for his autograph; [whereas] here people would look at him and recognise him but not too many people actually walked up to take a photo with him or anything like that.

They loved the Cayman Islands; so many people love it because we are clean, we are safe and we need to continue to protect that. We need to protect our borders at any cost. We need to make sure that the people who are coming here are filtered, right?

We see all around the world now, everyone is talking about immigration reform. Everyone is trying to tighten up their borders. Everyone is sending people back home, filtering all the bad out. What we need to do is make sure that they don't arrive here. We need to make sure our system is up to date and that we are filtering that out so we don't start to get the bad ones here, and make sure we continue to protect the Cayman Islands that we all know and grew up in.

Especially the people who I knew down in Cayman Kai where every door was left open, matter of fact, people never even owned a key for their front door. You could walk in the door, front door and back door were always open. That's the neighbourhood that I grew up in, where crime was little to none.

Back then, Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, and especially in Cayman Kai, had no one but Caymanians employed.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: One hundred per cent North Siders and East Enders employed. Our property managers were all North Siders. They were able to raise their families happily, they were able to go on vacations, they were able to send them to school, and they were able to live great lives. We started to see a transition when the North Siders started getting weaned out of Cayman Kai because we started to put a dollar value on it, versus what we had before. That transition started a change, we went from having one person look after the neighbourhood where if he saw a strange face he would tell someone and say, *Listen, I saw that strange person by your place*, or he would stop and confront that person and ask them, *Wha' ya doin' now?*

All of us here probably don't even know who cut our yard nowadays, because when they come to cut your yard half the time they have these ski masks on so that the cameras don't pick them up so they can scout out what's left in the back yard to come pick that up later on. Right? That's another thing that we need to look at too, these people riding around and working on the job sites in these ski masks and coming into your yard wearing them.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town Central: I brought that up before.

An Hon. Member: See, he's bringing it up for you again.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, the Member for George Town Central said he's brought it up before and he is committing to bring a Motion to the House to get that solved.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I thank the Member for that. That will be one of the New Year's presents we get from him early in the year, so thank you Member for George Town Central for that. I guarantee, I can tell you right now publicly, you've got my support for that. Just walking from my house to the beach I see too many of them riding past me with a mask on and I don't know who they are.

Mr. Speaker, if we don't start to claw back... The train has already started to leave Cayman and the Caymanians have been left behind, and now it's time that we pull the break. We're not slowing the train down, we need to pull the break and stop it and allow them to get back on to carry us all forward. One man left behind is too many and that's what we're looking for here today, to make sure that this reform is about Caymanians. Matter of fact, we even went as far as changing the name from immigration, because we want to send a statement of what it's about.

We talked about putting the IDs back in, and you know why? Because when the police officer stops someone, we want them to know whether they are on a work permit.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Or if you're a Caymanian. If that person doesn't have an ID then you detain them until you find out who they are, because you don't know if they came off the boat on the east side, or the west side, or the south side, or the north side.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, some of them that I see getting work permits nowadays, good God, man. I mean, come on man. We *gotta* put in points for how you look nowadays too.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Some people you see and you know. You can see it right on their face, man. Nobody might not want to say it on the mic, but I'm not

afraid to say it on the mic. You can see it, you can see it!

[Crosstalk]

An Hon. Member: Speak it!

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: You can see it directly, Mr. Speaker. We have a society that we just need to change, that's all. We don't need to apologise to anyone. Who do we need to apologise to? If we get it wrong, we need to apologise to the Caymanians for getting it wrong—

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: —but I don't apologise for anyone else. I can go home and sleep comfortably. My wife will tell you, by the time I hit the bed, that's it, I'm out. Nothing wrong with that. Clear conscience.

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Anyway, I think Rolston beat me at that, he can sleep faster than me.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, it is to that point and I think I've proven that now, why we are here. I'm [asking for] full support again. I'm asking everyone in this House, let us empower our Member for Prospect. Let us help him move forward a Bill that is so needed in this country. Let us decide that this one Christmas, *we not gon' play no politics with 'em*. We're going to deliver something for the Caymanians to be happy [about], so that every time you go to a corner you'll hear them talking about, "*Boy, I glad them guys brought this Bill today.*" That's where we want to get to today. That's what we want to see here.

Maybe if we move fast enough and maybe if I sit down now, we might get out before Christmas where we can get to socialise with our people, see and talk with them, and spread Christmas joy.

Mr. Speaker, with that I'm going to wrap up so that I am no longer in the way of today's debate. I want to thank the Minister, Member for Prospect; all his hard-working team; the then Minister, Member for Bodden Town East who was there and pushing this; and the Minister, Member for East End who had his part to play in the 2.5 quarters that he was there, pushing that forward and the hard work that he put into it too.

I can tell you, one of the other ones that I am looking forward to is the rollover policy for civil servants. Make no apologies on it. There are too many young Caymanians overseas who are coming back to the door and they need to come in. This is their place. I've seen so many of them in London just recently, so many, we have so much young talent over there. I'm hoping

that when they come back, we have the door open for them to be able to put them in place. Mr. Speaker, we have young talent in the government now that just needs the opportunity to step up to the next level, they just need that opportunity. I see it in them, I see the passion, I see the fire; but you know sometimes — borrowing the word from the Member for Bodden Town West — we have that little thing called 'bad mind' in the system and they'd love to hold that one person down.

When I look in the screen today I know what the people behind there are thinking. They know some of the people who I've been asking for to get the opportunity to move in that direction because they deserve it. They've been held down for too long. Their morale is being lost. They feel like there's no hope. There are civil servants like that too, who feel that they are just being held down, and I'm hoping that this is the start to opening some doors for them to move up, to move in that direction. Mr. Speaker, not to get too deep into it, but that is what secondments are built for, giving them opportunities.

Acting Governor, there are some people whom I've brought [to you], and I'm hoping that you will give them the opportunities to get up to the next level. Give them the opportunity to be seconded somewhere to bring their spirit and morale up, just to find something different that they might want to do. I don't want to take the high road. I will take the high road if I have to, to come down here and bring it line by line, call their names and talk and give them the information that is there, but I don't want to go that direction.

Help us get the Caymanians that we need. Help them push forward. That's all I'm asking. I don't need anything else, just help us get there. Many of these Caymanians want to work, they want to see something done. I know many of them want to work with my Ministry because they say we're the action Ministry. I can't hold all of them, but we're doing well with it.

An Hon. Member: Sounds nice.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I think we're about 1,200 people in total within the departments and the Ministry, hardworking people. Some of them working at night, we have teams that work hard at night at the Port Authority to make sure that when we wake up in the morning, there's food on the shelves. Everything is done. Gasoline has been delivered. They have been doing all of those things at night while we've been sleeping. They have been separated from their families to make sure that this country continues to work and to move forward. We need to applaud all of those hard-working people out there. Again, this is just making sure that it is about Cayman. It is about Caymanians and moving Cayman forward.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the whole House for their full support for the Minister of Caymanian Employment and I look forward to seeing this Bill passed.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Minister of Health, Environment & Sustainability.

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Mr. Speaker, honourable Members of this House, colleagues and fellow Caymanians, I rise today in full support of the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill presented by Minister Myles. I want to personally acknowledge my colleague, Minister Myles, who has managed to get this Bill here before the end of 2025 — record time, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I say an impressive start to his term as Minister of Caymanian Employment and Immigration.

As the Minister of Health, Environment and Sustainability, as a working mother and as a proud Caymanian woman, I understand deeply what is at stake in this conversation. Before I get into my debate, let me address something head-on — I am not anti-expatriate. As a matter of fact, my mother is American. I grew up in a household that celebrated both cultures. We had the benefit of having every fourth Thursday in November be American Thanksgiving and recently, when we took on Cayman Thanksgiving, every first Sunday in December be Cayman Thanksgiving, so I'd like to blame my waistline on that.

Also, my husband's family came here from Jamaica decades ago; and I have worked alongside many talented professionals from around the world throughout my career.

I'd just like to pause to say that two of the most instrumental mentors in my life, who actually pushed me into law, were expatriate individuals. They are now longstanding friends and they guide me whenever I need someone for advice. This Government is not anti-expatriate, and being pro-Caymanian is not being anti-expatriate.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: I'm going to repeat that — being pro-Caymanian does not mean we are anti-expat. It is about fairness. It's about sustainability, and sustainability is often confused with the environment, but it's much more than that. Passing this Bill touches on sustainability. It's about ensuring that our people have a fighting chance in their own country. That's what sustainability is, the wellbeing of our people.

Mr. Speaker, as Minister, I see every day the direct impact that our current immigration challenges have on our healthcare system, on our social services and on our communities. Our hospitals are strained.

The cost of providing indigent healthcare is tens of millions of dollars. Our social safety nets are stretched thin. We are trying to provide affordable and accessible healthcare services for all vulnerable Caymanians, but the demand continues to outpace capacity.

One of the most significant pressures we face is the pace at which Caymanian status is being granted. While we celebrate those who earn the right to call themselves Caymanians, we must also acknowledge a hard truth. Our country needs time to cope, to prepare and to build the infrastructure and systems necessary to serve the needs of all of our citizens, both existing and new. When status is granted faster than our healthcare facilities can expand, faster than our schools can accommodate, faster than our social services can adapt, it is our most vulnerable who suffer. Our elderly, waiting for care, our children in overcrowded classrooms and our families struggling to access the services that they need.

This Bill — and I'll refer to it as the immigration reform Bill because that's what it is — is not just about jobs, it is about creating a sustainable future where we can continue to invest in the health and wellbeing of our people without bankrupting our systems or compromising the quality of healthcare. It's about giving ourselves the breathing room we need to plan properly, to build capacity and to ensure that every single Caymanian, whether born here or granted status, can access the services and opportunities that they all deserve.

This Bill is fundamentally about safeguarding two groups who have been vulnerable for far too long: Caymanians seeking opportunity in their own country and foreign workers who come here in good faith and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. For too long we've seen Caymanians qualified, capable and ready to work, passed over for opportunities in their own homeland. We've seen young Caymanians enter the workforce only to hit glass ceilings that they cannot break. We have seen experienced Caymanians denied advancement because someone decided that it was simply easier or cheaper to look elsewhere. At the same time, we have seen foreign workers exploited, brought here under false pretences; underpaid, overworked and trapped in situations where they have no recourse and no protection.

This Bill addresses both injustices.

An Hon. Member: *Tell 'em.*

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: It creates clear pathways for Caymanians to enter and advance in their careers and it closes the loopholes that allow bad actors to exploit vulnerable workers. This is about fairness across the board. It's about creating a system where everyone, Caymanian and guest worker alike, knows the rules, understands their rights and can expect those rights to be enforced.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear, this immigration reform Bill is the first phase of a much larger

reform agenda. Immigration reform alone will not solve all of our challenges. It must be coupled with meaningful reform in education, training, workforce development and even healthcare. We cannot simply create opportunities for Caymanians if we do not also equip them with the skills, qualifications and confidence they need to seize those opportunities. That is why this Government is committed to a complete overhaul of our public school system. As we all know, education is the foundation of the future of success and we will not shy away from the hard work required to get it right. You have a great Minister of Education who happens to come from the district of West Bay.

We are also committed to expanding vocational training programmes, creating apprentices and building partnerships between our educational institutions and our private sector employers. We need a workforce that is not only ready to work, but ready to lead, ready to innovate and most importantly, ready to compete.

I just want to touch on what pathways have started or have been in existence as it relates to healthcare. Recently, there was a Trainee Psychiatric Nursing Assistant Programme at Poinciana Rehabilitation Centre. This shows what happens when we build defined career pathways into clinical work, and it's just the start. We at the Ministry are now building on that pathway that has been created with the coordination of the CMO [Chief Medical Officer], CNO [Chief Nursing Officer] and other policy team members, to transition to a qualified nursing regime that is licensed under the Cayman Islands Nursing Council. We have a ways to go, but it's all about creating pathways locally.

Also, the medical internship programme at the Health Services Authority follows the same pattern. Six junior doctors receive a full year of supervised rotation at HSA and a second year at a Caribbean Association of Medical Councils Institution through reciprocal agreements. I am going to be working with the CEO and the senior management team, along with the Medical and Dental Council, to revamp this programme and allow our Caymanian doctors to continue that second year right here in the Cayman Islands. This strengthens clinical competence and supports long-term development for Caymanian doctors. I am also working with the senior management team at HSA to expand these training programmes — I just spoke about that.

Before I come off of that I want to just pause, because I think we don't speak enough of the good that happens in our country and I want to publicly acknowledge Dr. Davina McCoy who recently finished her training right at HSA and is now a doctor in family medicine. Dr. McCoy is now a trailblazer in this space and what she has displayed as a working mother is resilience, which is who we are as Caymanians.

Having the ability to train right here at home, contributing to our healthcare needs, being a part of the pool of practitioners who are working right here at our hospital speaks again to the real reason why we need

to continue to build this programme out. What I'm hoping to accomplish is to not just have the training programme focused on family medicine, but we are going to take this to internal medicine and hopefully other specialisations.

We also have the HSA summer student intern programme, which HSA recently got an award for. Eighty-nine Caymanian high school students and college students completed the 2025 cohort, which is a four to six week rotation that places students across clinical and technical departments, offering direct exposure to the range of careers within the system, and more than 25 of those students return from previous years showing steady interest and a clear value. Again, this is what we need to do as leaders because we can't expect them to get into this career pathway when they're in their 30s, we need to start it from school age.

We will still need expatriate healthcare professionals, so as we continue to build in this area we acknowledge that there's still room to grow.

Mr. Speaker, this is a holistic approach and immigration reform is just one piece of that puzzle. Education reform is another, workforce development is another and together they form a comprehensive strategy to safeguard the future of our people. It's about safeguarding Caymanians at every stage of their lives. It's about safeguarding the young Caymanians entering the workforce for the first time, giving them a fair shot at building a career, at earning a living, at staying in the country they call home rather than being forced to leave in search of opportunities elsewhere.

I, too, was in London a few weeks ago and as my colleague Minister Jay just spoke about, that's what is heart-breaking, hearing our very ably qualified Caymanians say that they don't feel that there are opportunities for them at home.

It's about safeguarding the Caymanians who we already have here in our workforce. Those who have been working hard, paying their dues and waiting for their chance to advance. They deserve to see a clear path forward. They deserve to know that their experience, their loyalty and their contributions will be recognised and rewarded.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's [also] about safeguarding the Caymanians who haven't yet been born. It's about ensuring that when my children and when your children and grandchildren enter into the workforce in 10, 15, 20 years, they find a Cayman Islands that still belongs to them. A place where they are not strangers, not second class citizens, but full and equal participants in the economy and society that their ancestors built, which they will benefit from just like we did. This is intergenerational thinking, its long-term planning and its leadership.

One of the most frustrating things that I hear from young Caymanians is this, "*Well, Miss, I went to university, I got my degree, I came home ready to work and I can't get a job in my own country,*" that is unacceptable and that ends now.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks: Thank you, and that is actually what this Bill aims to address. This Bill ensures that suitably qualified Caymanians are given a fair chance. They're not asking for a handout or favour, but many of them just want a fair chance to compete for and secure employment. It ensures that when a position opens up, Caymanians are considered first. It ensures that when promotions are available, Caymanians are given the opportunity to advance. This is not about lowering standards. It is not about giving jobs to people who are not qualified. Those are all scare tactics. This is about ensuring that when a Caymanian is qualified, they are not overlooked, ignored or dismissed simply because it is just easier to hire someone else.

Let me be clear, we will still need an expatriate workforce, many of them at a professional level. We acknowledge that. Our economy depends on the contributions of talented people from around the world, but we must also create space, real meaningful space, for Caymanians to grow, to lead and to take their rightful place in the workforce.

In the healthcare sector, which means a whole lot to me, this means creating pathways for more Caymanians to become nurses, doctors, therapists, and health administrators — I spoke about that a little while ago in detail. It means investing in training and mentorship. It means ensuring that when our young people look at the healthcare industry, it doesn't seem unachievable. They see themselves reflected in leadership positions, in clinical roles, in decision-making spaces. This is the future that we're building and that is the opportunity that this Bill actually creates.

I must say that as a mother I often think about the future we are leaving for our children. What kind of Cayman will my children inherit? Will it be a place where they'll find meaningful work? Will it be a place where they feel like they belong, or will they feel like strangers in their own country? I refuse to accept a future where my children and your children are second class citizens in the country that our ancestors built! This is not about closing doors, it is about opening the right doors for the right reasons at the right place. It is about protecting our identity, our culture and our future while still welcoming those who come here to contribute, to respect our laws and our culture, and to enrich our society; but we must do this sustainably. We must also do it thoughtfully and we must do it in a way that puts Caymanians first. Not out of spite or out of prejudice, but out of a responsibility and a love for our country.

Minister Myles laid out the economic case for reform and let me just speak briefly to the sociocultural reality. We are at a risk of losing our identity. We are actually at a risk of losing what makes these Islands our home and I am not willing to let that happen, not on our watch. I don't think anyone here on the Government bench is willing to do that, and I'm pretty sure I can go

further and say that all elected Members are committed to not seeing that happen. Our communities are the backbone of our nation. Our elders (many of whom we're losing and it's so sad), our families and our traditions, they matter and they are under threat when we allow unchecked immigration and when we fail to prioritise our own people in employment, in housing, in healthcare and in education.

This Bill is about balance. Not in some vague, undefined way, but in a real, measurable, sustainable way. It is about ensuring that our economy thrives without sacrificing the soul of our nation. It is about ensuring that when we remain a place where Caymanians feel at home, where our culture is celebrated and where our children can grow up knowing that they have a culture here; that's Cayman.

The goals of my Ministry are directly aligned with the principles of this immigration reform Bill. We are working to provide affordable, accessible healthcare services for all vulnerable Caymanians, enhance public health programmes that improve health outcomes for all and promote physical health and social development through youth, sports and enrichment programmes, as we work closely together with the Minister of Social Development. None of these goals can be achieved if we continue down the current path.

We need to slow down the pace at which status is granted so that we can build the capacity to serve everyone properly. We need a workforce that includes and prioritises Caymanians and we need systems that can support the people they were designed to serve. This Bill gives us the tools to do that. It gives us the framework to plan, to invest and to deliver on our promises to the people of this country who we serve.

This Bill was not crafted in isolation, Mr. Speaker. Minister Myles and his team conducted extensive consultations with the public, with businesses and, as far as I know, with the Opposition. Town halls were held, feedback was collected, and stakeholder meetings including over 80 company representatives across every major sector [were held]. This Bill is not born out of division or discrimination, it is a Bill born of data, consultation and a genuine commitment to fairness.

Mr. Speaker, the insertion of section 8A [in clause 4] of this Bill provides the ability to share information, which, from an HSA perspective, will address unpaid bills by guest workers. This is currently an issue where work permit holders incur bills at the HSA and the hospital racks up what we refer to as bad debt. I had pulled it up on my phone, but in the interest of time I'll just reflect back to 2017, when the Member for Bodden Town West was in Public Accounts Committee and talked about the state of play of the unbilled debts or doubtful debts for HSA. With having this provision in place, while we may not completely eradicate that issue, it will certainly be a step forward to addressing it. This will [also] aid HSA sharing the data with WORC,

which is now how we can see this improving our doubtful debt. We will be able to reduce the debt.

There are some persons who are trying to make this seem like this is an area that can be compromised. Well, this provision will not allow for sharing of personal health information and we will still follow the data protection provisions. What it will do is aid the team from Minister Myles to acknowledge when a guest worker has a debt that they have not been paying at the HSA and we can ensure that that is addressed prior to any moving forward of renewals.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Myles and his team listened, and in some instances as we see from some of the Committee Stage amendments, they've adjusted. We are moving forward with this Bill which reflects the needs of our economy, the concerns of our businesses and the rights of our people. We will continue to listen — as I said earlier, this is just phase one. There is more work to be done, but we are all committed to doing that work transparently, collaboratively and with the best interests of this country at heart.

Another area of the Bill that touches healthcare is the insertion of section 83A. Minister Myles and his team consulted with my Chief Officer and Ministry staff to ensure that this transitional provision ensures that HSA has the ability to transition over a period of 12 months without there being any negative impact on healthcare staff or healthcare delivery. This aids in aligning the work permit regime and moving away from contracts. Again, in line with what Minister Jay spoke about earlier, the excitement that we all share about moving forward with a civil service rollover policy and that's what this provision aids with.

I'm just about ready to wrap up here, Mr. Speaker and I want to echo what Minister Myles shared, which really spoke to me. Imagine a Cayman where Caymanians are given a fair opportunity to apply for and secure employment in their own country. Caymanians are prioritised and they are prized and sought after employees, they're valued for their skills — as we know many of our people got some really great skills — their knowledge, they're all smart; and their connection to this place.

A thriving economy exists where the labour force is prepared and ready to work because we have invested in education, training and workforce development. Guest workers are hired efficiently, they're treated fairly and they're protected from exploitation. The rules are clear, the process is efficient and the decisions are fair and predictable. Our healthcare system, our schools and our social services can meet the needs of our people because we have taken the time to build capacity and plan for growth; and that is the Cayman that we are building. That is the Cayman that this Bill helps to create.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has the courage to make difficult decisions in the long term interests of this country. We are not here to maintain the status quo. We are not here to make easy promises that

sound good but deliver nothing. We are not here to lead, to reform and to build a stronger, fairer Cayman just on promises — we're here to do it with action and that's what this Bill displays.

We are definitely at a place where we need to slow down the rate at which Caymanian status is granted. Not to punish anyone, but to give ourselves the time and the space that we need to serve our citizens properly. Immigration reform is definitely essential and it must be coupled with all of the other areas that we've talked about — education reform, training reform and workforce development; they all have to work hand in hand.

This Bill is fair, it is data driven, it is results-oriented and let's face it — it is long overdue. It safeguards Caymanians entering the workforce, it safeguards Caymanians who are already in the workforce and it safeguards the future of the Cayman Islands for those who aren't even here yet. It protects foreign workers from exploitation, it creates opportunity, it builds capacity, it restores balance... I could go on.

I stand with the NCFC Government and Minister Myles and I stand here in support of the immigration reform Bill to help safeguard the people of the Cayman Islands, both citizens and foreign workers. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, when passed, paves the way towards a Cayman that works for Caymanians. Let us move forward together with confidence, with clarity and with conviction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The House is suspended until 2pm.

Proceedings suspended at 12:29pm.

Proceedings resumed at 1:58pm.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

READING BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker: Parliamentarians, it gives me great pleasure and real joy to have this opportunity to honour these Caymanian pastors for their hard work and to show some appreciation, gratitude and support for all they do, providing Cayman with a moral compass.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: To quote 1 Timothy 5:17, “**The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.**”

We are privileged to have in our House of Parliament today the following Caymanian pastors, and I would ask that when I call your name if you would

stand, except for Bro. Robert, so that all the Members can recognise who you are.

We have Pastor Alson Ebanks.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Robert Ebanks, who is sitting in the Chamber.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Stanwyck Myles, who has a conflict and sends his apology that he was unable to attend.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Winston Rose.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Garrett Haylock.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Bro. Dale Forbes.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor James Arch.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Veta McLaughlin, also in the Chamber.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Oral McLaughlin.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Kyle McLean.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Honourable 1st Head Elder Winston Bodden.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Pastor Andrew Ebanks.

[Applause]

The Speaker: And of course, our own Pastor Kim Evans.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Now, I ask us as parliamentarians to acknowledge these pastors who work hard among us, who care for us, care for us in the Lord and who admonish us. Hold them in the highest regards in love because of their work. We need to live and work in peace with each other. To quote Hebrews 13:7, “**Remember your leaders who first taught you the word of God. As you watch the way they live and the way they die, imitate their faith.**”

I take this opportunity to thank each of you for being a shepherd to Caymanians and a guiding light to our lives. Your dedication to the Lord's work touches our lives, hearts and souls daily. For your guidance, wisdom and unwavering faith, we are forever grateful. You are a blessing to this country and we thank God for each of you. May God continue to pour out his richest blessings on each of you and your families and our beloved Cayman Islands.

[Applause]

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

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Speaker. As a lay pastor myself and as a Member of Parliament, it does my heart quite well today.

I first of all wish to put on record a hearty congratulations on behalf of the Opposition, and by extension all of our colleagues in this honourable House, for your insight and foresight of recognising that He, being almighty God, has founded us, the three Cayman Islands, upon the seas and he has established— there is an 'ed' on to that, but that doesn't mean that he did it and it's unfinished. What God does is complete. What he states, I believe it, and that settles it.

We want to extend a word of support and indeed, for some of us, if not all of us, sincere daily prayers. You are the ones of the Nehemiah days who have found the gap within the Cayman jurisdiction, have stood in the gap one hand on the sword and one hand working and still encourages our people for our mind to work. When we remove God — and I hope that never happens, even when he says, *son, go call my children home* — Cayman will still be singing *Hallelujah to the most highest God*, because it is through His wisdom, His knowledge and His understanding that His mercies are new every morning.

We are eternally grateful as parliamentarians for our forefathers and our foremothers who carried that torch and who lit the world even in the darkest of hours so that we can have as Paul the Apostle said, *a lively hope* for a better home to come. May your work return with the favour of souls abundantly and may you each and your families, as Joshua said, “**As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**” By extension, I would

invite anyone of the parliamentarians who have not yet had that wonderful, personal, intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, it will be worth it all.

Until then, let's continue to pray for those in authority, not meaning just Elected Members or Honourable Speaker, but yes, pray for us as well, while we in return pray for you and your families. Your job is a hard one. As one of the older Caymanians said, *if my crown so get even heavier, the neck would be broken, but we know that with God, all things are possible*. Thus, when Cayman seems so broken and when social media seems to have come and inculcated the pulpit, rest assured that with Christ in the vessel, we will not only sail through every storm, but he's a conquering saviour.

May God of eternal and infinite love and mercy, may His light shine perpetual upon you, now and hereafter. God bless each and every one, and once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak on this topic? If not, I invite us all to stand and give proper gratitude to these people.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Minister of Caymanian Employment and Immigration, I think you have some people you would like to recognise as well.

Hon. Michael S. Myles, Minister of Caymanian Employment & Immigration, Elected Member for Prospect: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it warms my heart to provide Parliament with an update of what my Ministry has been doing over the last eight months, as our Ministry was tasked with bringing back our people to the tourism sector.

Minister Ruddy and I, one of the first objectives that we did as we got settled within the first month was meet with approximately five of the larger hotels on Island. We sat down and listened to some of the challenges that they face, but one of the major things that we saw was, we did not have enough of our people on the front lines. It gave me the opportunity to also engage the Grand Hyatt, which is coming online in April; and the teams of ONE | GT as well, which is about to come online in February or March. As I listened to some of the challenges that they were dealing with, much of it evolved around human resources.

We regrouped with both of the newer hotels, but we also engaged the Cayman Islands Tourism Association (CITA). We felt that CITA needed to be a member, certainly of the Ministry of Caymanian Employment on an ongoing basis, and we ensured that they were one of the partners that would deliver the success for us.

On September 8th and 9th, we had an extensive open house at the Marriott. We had over 300 people — Caymanians, PR [Permanent Resident] holders, RERC [Residency & Employment Rights Certificate] holders, married to Caymanians. They're all Caymanians to me, but just to name the many subsections that they fell in. This was after I was told that Caymanians did not want to work on the front lines of tourism. We had an overwhelming number of folks who came out to that open house.

Prior to that open house, we also had ONE | GT and Grand Hyatt interview an extensive number of Caymanians whom they have put the green light on employing.

What came out of the open house is one programme that was created by ONE | GT. Ms. Cashema Clarke, the HR manager of ONE | GT, is here. Ms. Clarke has been a stellar supporter of development. She is Caymanian. She has worked extremely hard to pull this programme off and prove to the Government, and certainly to the people of our country, that Caymanians can and should be on the front lines of our tourism product.

Six weeks ago, Ms. Cashema started the ONE | GT Mindset Programme. It was cosponsored by my Ministry and by ONE | GT. She led it along with her team. We invited 42 people, all Caymanians. Out of that 42, 28 accepted the invitation and 20 Caymanians showed up. Today, I am going to acknowledge the 20 who got through the six week programme and I also want to acknowledge that all of these young and certainly seasoned people have jobs today. All 20 have employment with ONE | GT.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Of the 20, 13 participants will have full time employment; 7 participants are going to be on a three month internship with ONE | GT and eventually transition into full-time employment. The Ministry of Caymanian Employment and Immigration is cosponsoring that internship. We believe that with all the training that these folks have gone through, they deserve every level of success. We also believe that as we move these programmes through all industries, it will prove that industry is really the best place to have these particular training programmes and not a government entity.

Our goal is also to further expand into other sectors. Minister Ebanks is certainly working on the construction sector, and I know Minister Anglin is also working very diligently with UCCI to expand some of the TVET programmes there.

We also believe that in terms of the tourism product, the best places to do this is in our restaurants — we have some of the finest restaurants in the world — the bars, if people want to get into that service industry, and our resorts here.

I'd like to hail up... Folks, I know that all 20 of you guys aren't here, but as I call your name, if you can stand and be recognised. I'd like to start with Ms. Cashema Clarke first, the HR director and the facilitator of this programme.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Nakeeda Lewis. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Josen Ebanks. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Janilee Dixon. Please give Janilee a hand. She's not here, but she did very well.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Shivon McLean Smith. Let's give her a hand.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Avia Smith.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Shirley Grant. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Angela Somers.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Shanieka Lewis.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Georgia McCalla.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Rosanne Llewellyn. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: D'Andre Snowball. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Ann-Marie Swaby. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Annabelle Bush. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Jordan Watler.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Kimberly Dilbert Powell. Well done.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Jaden McCoy.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Althea Swaby. Well done, Ms. Althea.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Avery-Ann Rankine.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Atarah Thompson. Well done

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Sean Vasquez. Well done, Sean.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: In addition to our 20, ONE | GT has also confirmed the employment of 6 additional Caymanians who have already been hired in numerous capacities at the hotel. They're not here, but I'm going to call them just so we can hail them up as well.

The first one is Seantel Jackson. Seantel is going to be hired as a front desk clerk.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Vanessa McLean. Vanessa is going to be hired as the front desk supervisor.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Janet Christian. Janet is going to be the housekeeping supervisor.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Allison Walton is going to be a hostess. Well done, Alison.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: Jermain Williams is going to be hired as a concierge.

[Applause]

Hon. Michael S. Myles: All of these folks were hired through the open house that we hosted at the Marriott on September 8th and 9th. I'm most excited to report to Parliament that we've just gotten the numbers from CITA, and going into this season, they have green-lighted, across the spectrum from hotels to bars to restaurants, the hiring of 75 Caymanians on the front line. There are going to be many really great opportunities here. We've also met with Grand Hyatt who have informed us that they will be hiring 110 Caymanians. They have already put the greenlight on 110 Caymanians, and with them not opening their hotel until April, we are also looking into what other needs they have because we have many more people who are willing to get into the sector.

I'd like to thank my colleagues for all of their support and all of the work that they have done to open up a number of different lines of communication with their networks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to welcome these folks. Thank you guys. Well done. Great job Cashema in pulling this programme off, and thank you to our team. Thanks, bye.

[Applause]

The Speaker: Member for Bodden Town West. You needed to recognise someone.

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

Mr. Speaker, I want to also thank you for inviting the pastors here today, and I want to thank my colleague from Cayman Brac East for the words that she delivered. Originally, when I said I wanted to stand up, it was actually to commend you on that initiative because Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to my colleague from Cayman Brac East I couldn't help but remember 2 Chronicles 7:14, which says **"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face, turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sins and heal their lands."** If there's one thing that Cayman needs more than anything, and that has always been in need of, is prayers.

I think that the success that we have here today is because many of our fore parents left many blessings in our prayer banks, and for that we could never repay them.

[Applause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, thanks for allowing me this. I don't know if you need a copy of what I'm about to read.

Mr. Speaker, the Caribbean Media Exchange (CMEx) Leadership Awards was last Sunday, 7th December, 2025 at the Loews Coral Gable Hotel in Miami, Florida. That annual event saw the gathering of distinguished leaders, cultural icons, tourism executives, and community champions from across the region to celebrate Caribbean advancement, excellence, and service. This year's ceremony was one of the most highly anticipated gatherings as there was a special presentation, the inaugural CMEx Lifetime Achievement Award which was bestowed on Sir Baltron Bethel, one of the Caribbean's most accomplished tourism visionaries and a national icon of the Bahamas. Sir Baltron holds the distinction of being the first and longest serving Bahamian Director General of Tourism, whose global influence shaped the region's tourism policy and development.

However, Mr. Speaker, also recognised at that event of promoting Caribbean excellence was the Cayman Islands' very own Shomari Scott.

[Applause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: While Shomari is known to many of us in this honourable House and the public at large, for those unfamiliar with Shomari, he's the chief business officer for Health City Cayman Islands, a pioneering healthcare facility founded by renowned heart surgeon, Dr. Devi Shetty.

For more than a decade, Shomari has played a defining role in transforming the hospital's vision into reality, leading brand development, marketing and strategic partnerships. His innovative approach has elevated Health City into a symbol of quality and compassion in healthcare across the Caribbean, which features in USA Today, Forbes and the Harvard Business Review, underscoring its reputation.

Before joining Health City, Shomari dedicated 18 years to the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism, rising from intern to Director of Tourism. His strategic vision helped drive a 25 per cent increase in arrivals during a global recession, proving his ability to deliver results under pressure. Shomari is a passionate advocate for youth and is able to combine his love of basketball with community service, mentoring young people and providing positive outlets. His commitment earned him the Young Caymanian Leadership Award in 2013 and recognition as an emerging pioneer in tourism at National Heroes Day in 2017.

Shomari's leadership extends across civic and educational spheres. He has served on the boards of the National Housing Development Trust; Civil Service Complaints Commission; and the Cayman Chamber of Commerce, where he was president. His roles as deputy chair of the Board of Governors at the University College of the Cayman Islands (UCCI) and chair of the

Education Council reflects his dedication to advancing education and community development.

Shomari also played a critical role in the Cayman Islands' COVID-19 response, through Health City, and shared the social services and healthcare vertical of the Government's Strategic Economic Advisory Committee.

Shomari is a graduate of Stetson University which, with a Bachelor of Business Administration and Marketing and over two decades, was able to apply his skills to create a lasting impact on both healthcare and tourism. His influence on brand identity, strategic communication and community development continues to shape the region, solidifying his legacy as a transformative leader.

Shomari is the proud son of Tony and Marjorie Scott, who has also instilled in many, including me, to always work hard, help whenever and wherever you can and strive for excellence.

Colleagues, please join me in congratulating Shomari in our customary fashion.

[Desk thumping]

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

The Speaker: Thank you all very much.

SECOND READINGS

IMMIGRATION (TRANSITION) (AMENDMENT AND VALIDATION) BILL, 2025

(Continuation of debate)

The Speaker: Continuing the Second Reading debate, Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2025. Does any other Member wish to speak?

Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my contributions to the Immigration (Transition) (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2025 that is before this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that this is an emotive issue, a very emotive issue, and if we are not careful, it can be seen as an "us versus them" situation. For those of you who know me, I really don't like to type out and read speeches or as they say, *copious amount of notes*, but I decided out of an abundance of caution to put my thoughts on paper to make sure I don't say or do anything... I can go off script and I know sometimes I can get a little bit animated.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a second generation Caymanian. My grandmother, the late Susan McLean Robinson arrived here in the late 1940s and she first settled in Cayman Brac. My father, the late Roy Saunders arrived here in the 1960s. During that time, opportunities in Cayman were limited and like many young men at

that time, he went to sea to make a living. My own wife, Mr. Speaker, Shawnette, hails from Montego Bay, Jamaica.

I think it is safe to say that the quiet contributions that our family has made in the tourism, construction and development industries have allowed them to make their unique contributions to our beloved Cayman Islands. Whether it was Shawnette helping people to settle their claims after hurricane Ivan; her brother Lee Elliott, who is actually married to Darlene Owens from West Bay, clearing the roads after hurricane Ivan; her sister Keysha Wynn helping many Caymanians with homeownership; or her sisters Rose and Andrea, welcoming Caymanians home or visitors to our shore while working for our national airlines Cayman Airways. They are living proof, like my dad and grandmother, of how Cayman's success wasn't built on immigration but rather integration. People coming here and becoming part of the Caymanian fabric and the Caymanian community.

Mr. Speaker, there is no secret that there are elements in our community and our Islands whose sole mission is to divide us. There are some people in our community who arrive on our shores that mean the Caymanian people no good.

Mr. Speaker, I got an early crash course while working at an accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, shortly after returning from university. Ironically, despite spending several years in the United States studying, it is right here in Cayman that I got my first experience with racism and discrimination.

I was in an audit engagement for a company named Sea Launch that was located in what was then Safe Haven. I still remember it like it was yesterday, even though it was more than 25 years ago. I was paired up with a guy by the name of George Bryan-Orr and he asked me if I ever went to the jungle bar. I basically told him that wasn't my scene. That wasn't my thing. He said to me, *you know, I went there the night before and they were all dark-faced people and they all look like savages*. I'll never forget it.

I said George, it is a statements like those that cause problems between Caymanians and expats. He said to me that if we don't want expats here, we can go back to our dirt roads and mosquitoes.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, if we weren't at a client engagement, I probably would have responded differently at that time. I reported his behaviour to the then managing partner — she thought it was funny and said she would put him on some sensitivity course, whatever that meant. Mr. Speaker, in good ol' Caymanian fashion, I did what needed to be done and I left it at that.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, I want to publicly thank Ms. Sharon Roulstone who was then the chair of the Immigration Board for standing up and fighting for Caymanians. That kind of behaviour from people like George Bryan-Orr has no place in Cayman or any civilised society.

Funny enough, Mr. Speaker, I remember one Friday evening when Arthur Andersen got the news that a work permit was turned down. One of the auditors from the great state of Alabama — [I'll] never forget him. I remember his face, but I can't remember his name. They were all gathering around, grumbling and complaining that a permit got turned down and in the midst of it, his contribution to the complaining and grumbling was, *somebody needs to burn a cross in our yard*. Mr. Speaker, the look on the other expats' face said enough, because they were just as shocked as me. All I remember saying to myself was, you next. Mr. Speaker, ironically, while preparing for this debate, I decided to Google Mr. George Bryan-Orr to see what he was up to, and funnily enough, I came across an interview that he did. He talked about his time in Cayman. He basically said that he was originally from Canada and he saw an ad where they were looking for auditors in Cayman, he applied and then a month later he was in Cayman. I remember reading that and saying to myself, was one month really a sufficient time for us to vet some individuals before we bring them to our shores? Is it time that we join other countries now and start looking at people's social media history to see exactly who we're bringing into this country? The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to start doing more things to tighten our borders, because this is now a different world.

Mr. Speaker, discrimination is real. Our people face it every day. I know you also had to deal with the challenges Caymanians faced when you were in a previous role in the private sector. I was told that you used to have meetings with Caymanian staff only, at certain times, even though you're in HR.

Oh, Mr. Speaker, to be fair, there are many who have come to our shores who have done well and have done right by Caymanians. For every one George Bryan-Orr, there are hundreds of good, decent people who come here with the right intentions. I am living proof of that, Mr. Speaker.

I've had a pretty decent career prior to entering politics where I held senior positions in the telecom industry and the financial services industry, and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, in all those positions the persons who looked out for me and promoted me were expats; but I want to say this to balance the scales, the persons who helped me get a foot in the door were our own fellow Caymanians. I am happy that I started my career in a time where Caymanians went above and beyond to really look out for Caymanians.

Mr. Speaker, my first senior management role was at Cable & Wireless Regional Office. You know who helped me through the door? Carla Sue McLaughlin, Kurt's sister-in-law. I went there, did my interview; I guess I did well. They asked Carla if she knew me and as far as she was concerned, I was the best thing since sliced bread. Carla didn't know me, but she knew my family members and she used that to give me a glowing report and help me through the door.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I won't stop there. I want to jog your memory back to when you chaired the Immigration Board. I can tell anybody that it is because of your chairmanship and the line that you drew, Steve Scott and Michael Alberga, why doors were opened for me at Digicel also. I can tell anybody that. Then, at HSBC Mr. Speaker, Walling Whittaker opened that door.

Mr. Speaker, there are two individuals I really need to mention, and you'll understand why I'm singling those two out shortly. I have to give maximum respect to Gonzalo Jalles, the former CEO of HSBC Bank in Cayman; and Michael Schrum, who was a former CFO of HSBC Bermuda and is now the President and Group Chief Financial Officer of Butterfield Group. I single those men out because they truly understand one basic rule. The purpose of education isn't to make you employable. The purpose of education is to make you trainable, and being trainable is what makes you employable.

Those two men hired me to be the CFO of a Class A bank, Mr. Speaker, when my only banking experience at that time was standing in a bank line waiting for the teller to say, next. I want people to think about that, being a CFO of a bank and I never worked in a bank before, even though I held previous CFO roles.

I cannot in good conscience stand in this Parliament and not recognise the contributions made by thousands of expats over the years, who have looked out and have done right for Caymanians, because of a few bad apples; and I say we let those same bad apples through the doors. My personal journey doesn't afford me that luxury, despite George Bryan-Orr and the man who wanted to burn a cross in Sharon Roulstone's yard. That is not the Caymanian story and not the story that we should have recorded in this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker to quote my good friend and former MP for East End, Mr. Arden Mclean, "*You see our glory; you don't know our story.*"

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, let me offer this honourable House and the listening public, something to consider. I'm going down this road so that Caymanians and all those who call the Cayman Islands home can better understand the Cayman Islands and the Caymanian people. I want to use this opportunity to highlight the uniqueness of the Cayman Islands and the Caymanian people so we can all better understand each other.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to ask any Member of this honourable House or the public as a whole to tell me the country or island that had the following economic metric: 70 per cent of their population live in rural conditions, 10 per cent have access to electricity, 10 per cent have a secondary education, an average life expectancy of 45 years and more than 50 per cent of

income being spent on food — most people would think that it was either some place in Africa or some backward place in Southeast Asia. Truth be told, that was the great United States of America, just over 100 years ago. Look at the United States today.

Mr. Speaker, the Cayman Islands just over 50 years ago wasn't much better. Look at the Cayman Islands today. What happened? Today we look back and we call it a miracle, but for those who were alive back then, it was just another Thursday.

While for historical purposes, Mr. Speaker, Cayman was a colony of the United Kingdom, the truth is the Cayman Islands were never really colonised because we had nothing to offer them back then. Unlike our other Caribbean neighbours that were truly developed so their wealth could be exploited, we didn't have any sugar cane, bananas, tobacco or cotton to give them, and as such, they had no use for us. We were an outlier in the British Empire. We were the Islands that time forgot.

To borrow a phrase from Roy Bodden's book *Cayman [Islands] in Transition*: "The Cayman Islands found themselves in a unique position of being a society with slaves as opposed to a slave society." [UNVERIFIED QUOTE]

In retrospect, Mr. Speaker, that makeup of our society contributed to Cayman's success, and I'll explain why shortly. Before doing so, I want to go back to the United States and look at one of the things that the United States did at the turn of the 20th century, which started them on the path to becoming a global superpower; namely, their ability to innovate and create industries from scratch.

A perfect example of this, Mr. Speaker, was the auto industry. At the start of the 20th century, the car was seen as a tool or toy that only the rich could afford. Henry Ford changed that with his Model T. He made a car that was practical and affordable for the average person and that revolutionised transportation in the United States in 1908.

Would you believe, Mr. Speaker, that when Henry Ford started making cars there were barely any roads to drive on. The cars actually came before the roads. As a matter of fact, the US Government tried to build roads for decades before and they had to abandon it as they couldn't raise the money. However, with the tax on car sales and gasoline, they were able to raise money and the rest is history. The point I'm making is that the innovation and industriousness of the American people came before their success.

Mr. Speaker, I raise that point to put in context what I'm about to say about the Cayman Islands. By the Cayman Islands being abandoned and left as an outcast of the British Empire, it forced our people to innovate and become industrious. We literally created an industry from scratch and that. The ships weren't coming to us, so what did we do? We built our own ships. The world wasn't coming to us, so what did we do? We went to the world. That's how we started out.

Jobs were unavailable here, so what did we do? Our men went to sea and found jobs. We were industrious. We had that can-do attitude, that never-give-up attitude. That is the foundation of what built these Islands.

Mr. Speaker, to truly understand this foundation that many people in the new world, in the Caribbean and the Americas may not realise, I want you to consider this — the natural state of how you build a country goes through a three-stage process.

First, it starts at the community level. People get together, whether it be through geography, religion, language or whatever, but they come together as a community and that's where it starts. As they come together as a community and start trading amongst themselves, whether it be the barter system or whatever, they create an economy. As the community grows and the economy grows, they create a political system. The natural order of development is community, economic, political. That is how countries are built.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that for a reason. Every country around us in the Caribbean did not go through that process. Because they were exploited for their natural resources, they started out with the economy coming first, then they put a political system in place to make sure that the economy did what it was supposed to do; and then, last but [not] least, were the slaves. For countries around us, our neighbours in this region, their development was economic, political, community.

The United States was no different. As a result, Mr. Speaker, as the US exported their influence, they also exported their style. Now, you find in many countries politicians get up and say that the economy is doing well. What about the people? The system was never ever designed for that. That is actually what separates Cayman, because we started community, economy, political. What we have done, Mr. Speaker, is over the years as we have brought more people into our country, they have brought in their system that they are used to — economy, political, community.

This is what makes Cayman unique. To borrow the tagline from the Member for Newlands in the 2021 Election — "Community Creates Country". They got it right. That is what separates Cayman. The people coming here have to realise that buried in their own DNA, inculcated in them, is a system where the community comes last; for us, it comes first. That is where the clash of ideologies and different things come from, where do we put the importance of these structures?

Mr. Speaker, as we fast forward to today, the here and now, the crux of this debate which is really what we want the future of Cayman to look like, and most importantly what we want for the Caymanian people, whom we are all elected to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I have contested four elections. I was successful in three. What I've learned with my 12 years of active politics is that our people are smart enough to know that the problems that we have weren't created overnight, and they know they're not going to

be fixed overnight. Any politician foolish enough to get up and tell them that there is a quick fix for this, you'll learn very quickly at the polls that Caymanians do not take to false promises. They are pragmatic and they are reasonable and they are patient, but do not take them for fools, because you do not build what we have here by being fools. I want people to recognise that.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, as I attempted to be cautious and politically correct and play it safe, the truth is that the hardworking, aspirational Caymanians that I represent in Bodden Town West do not want me to play it safe; they actually want me to be bold. With that said, I want to make one thing perfectly clear to everyone listening: the good old days of the '70s, '80s and '90s aren't coming back. The world we are living in is a completely different place. The problems that we have today were caused by us and the good news is they can be fixed by us.

We don't have an immigration problem in this country, Mr. Speaker, truth be told. What we have is an enforcement problem.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: We can pass all the legislation we want and it won't mean diddly if we don't enforce it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister in opening his debate, spoke about a record number of Caymanian statuses that were issued in 2024 — well over 1,500. What the Minister didn't mention was the number that was issued the year before and from the record that was given to me, you know what the number was the year before? Two hundred and sixty-six. You know why? I had a board chaired by Dr. Steve McField and I equipped him with the right individuals to enforce our laws. No fast food status grants, no drive-through status grants. I left the government, my board was dismantled, and the results speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister in his opening debate on this Bill spoke about the total number of status grants over the last number of years. For ease of reference, this was the breakdown that was provided to me:

Year	Total number of status grants
2011	422
2012	576
2013	607
2014	677
2015	635
2016	699
2017	635
2018	791
2019	641
2020	416

2021	590
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Mr. Speaker, I want to pause right here for a second, because when we came into office and we saw how this was trending, I met with the board. I think Minister Bryan [at the time] and Minister Bush also came with me. Then in 2021 we went from 590 down to 523 because we were determined to start reversing it. By 2023 it went down to 266; and then in 2024 [it was] 1,567.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to extend my thanks to Dr. McField and his board and commend them for the job that they did. The members of the Caymanian Status and Residency Board at that time were Chairman Dr. Steve McField; Magalyn Robinson-Clarke, who was recommended by my good friend the Member for George Town Central; Rosworth McLaughlin; the late Charlie Watler; Denise Webster DeMercado; Joan Barnes; Thelda Whittaker; Carmen McField; Samantha Conolly; Joy Boucher; Dajsha Samuels; Chris Durant; Jil Ebanks Mojica and Stephen Scott.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot thank the Member for George Town Central, Mr. Bryan; and Mr. Bush [enough] for standing with me when the pressure mounted, when we decided to force businesses to do right by Caymanians. For that, I will forever be in their debt.

Mr. Speaker, it was because of that approach that when we look at the number of unemployed Caymanians... I want to read out these numbers to you. These are available on eso.ky under Labour Force Survey Reports:

Year	Total Number of Unemployed Caymanians
2011	1,732
2012	1,925
2013	1,818
2014	1,562
2015	1,209
2016	1,406
2017	1,515
2018	996
2019	1,201
2020	1,759
2021	1,803

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The year 2021 is what we inherited — 1,803.

Mr. Speaker, recognising what we entered when we came into [office] and what the atmosphere was in labour markets, we went out there and we had those come to Jesus meetings with some of those people. You know what the total number of unemployed Caymanians was in 2022? It was 796; the lowest that it has ever been in more than 20 years. We had the lowest Caymanian unemployment rate at that time and it

required us to go out there and have those uncomfortable come to Jesus meetings with people. Once you sit down and you look at them in their face and they understand that you mean business, you will get results. I left in 2023 with 1,143, and in 2024 with 1,048.

Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons why you rarely see me at corporate events. It's not that I don't like people or I don't like going to events, but I'm not going to sit down and break bread with people who I know don't mean right by my people.

You can call me many things, and people have called me many things, but the one thing you *ain't gonna* call Chris Saunders is a hypocrite. If I like you, you know I like you; and if I don't like you, you will know. You're not going to walk off wondering, does Chris like me; does Chris not like me? Oh you will know, because I will tell you. Move from beside me, *I nuh gah nothin' to say to you*. That's just how I am. That's as basic as I am. That's just me.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, I also want to thank the members of both the Work Permit Board and the Business Staffing Plan [Board] who made those results possible, because they held the line. I can't take the credit — they did it. They sat there and they held the line.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Business Staffing Plan Board at that time were Richard Barton, who was the Chair; Dawn McLean-Sawney, the Deputy Chair; Stephanie Webster; Tamara Rankine; Melesia Adderly; Sherry-Ann Smith; Kimberly Conolly; Orrett Connor; Vanessa Rivers; and Paula Tatham.

The members of the Work Permit Board at that time, Mr. Speaker: Maxine Bodden Robinson was the Chair; the late Robert Whittaker; Judy Ann Ebanks; Audley Scott; Pauline Green; Carson Denny Ebanks; Dennis Caum; Sarah Dean Barnett; Edward Hessing; Yvette Charlton; Miguel Smith; Anne Marie Francis; Jerry Wood; and Daisy Martin.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the country owes them a debt, because when the headline in the newspaper February 28th, 2002 [*sic*] read: "10,600 work permits deferred over last 10 months", people in all kinds of quarters went crazy.

Mr. Speaker, I also have to recognise some other persons, that is, my Chief Officer at that time Mr. Wesley Howell; and the acting Director of WORC at the time, Mr. Jeremy Scott. Most people don't realise that a lot of permits are also approved by administrators and it is important that we, as elected government, give them the right direction. One of the things I remember saying to them at the very first meeting was: listen, I know the Minister of Finance very well. Don't worry about the revenue from work permits, just do your job. We want to look out for Caymanians. If we have to lose \$10 million per year in work permit revenue, so be it, but we want our people to come first.

Mr. Speaker, that is important. While these are numbers, this is still people's dignity we're talking about. There is nothing worse than when you are in

your own country and you don't feel as if you can participate when you see everyone else around you doing well. Don't care who you are, Mr. Speaker, that must make you feel a way.

In case anyone forgets, I will tell people straight up, I work for voters. I'm a politician. I can tell you exactly what I tell business people when I meet with them: if voters in this country can't work, people who don't vote *nuh gon' work*. I work for voters. When you find jobs for my voters, then we can talk about your non-voters. It's as simple as that. That's politics. I'm sorry. I make no apologies for that. That's just how it is.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we can pass the legislation, but you better have the spirit to enforce it. The only good thing I can say, Mr. Speaker, is I know the Minister of Caymanian Employment and Immigration's mindset, and from what I've seen, I don't get the impression that he is one who will break or bend under pressure.

[*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: For that, you have my support, because I know the pressure that you're under. It is not an easy job. I know the pressure that your colleagues are under too. I know they will come and say to you *well Michael, this or that or whatever*, I know what that is like too. Stand firm, my brother.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we're living in a different time. We may not realise it, but there is a global reset that is happening right before our eyes. The best way to sum this up is to paraphrase a quote made famous by Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the former ruler and principal founder of modern Dubai. It goes: "*My grandfather walked 10 miles to work every day, my father walked 5 miles; I'm driving a Cadillac, my son is in a Mercedes, my grandson is in a Ferrari, but my great grandson will be walking again; why is that? Tough times create tough people, tough people create easy times; easy times create weak people and weak people create tough times.*"

Mr. Speaker that quote highlights the fact that every four generations, every 80 years, there is a reset. The last global reset started in 1945 at the end of World War II, four generations ago. Do you know what 80 years, or four generation is from 1945? It is 2025. We are now witnessing that reset. This is the world that we're living in. All the institutions that were created to ensure global peace and prosperity are either being torn down or are torn down. The side effects of that is what we are seeing now. National lines are being drawn, immigrants being blamed and the drums of war beating louder by the day.

Our job in this Parliament is to recognise the risk that the Cayman Islands and the Caymanian people face and put plans and policies, legislation and regulations in place to manage and mitigate those risks.

For the record, Mr. Speaker, hope is not a plan and hope is not a policy.

Mr. Speaker, what are some of the risks that are facing the Cayman Islands and the Caymanian people? First and foremost is health, and when I say health I'm talking about access, quality and affordability.

Now, someone tuning into this debate would want to know what immigration has to do with health. Short answer: everything. The majority of people who are employed in healthcare are non-Caymanians. We also need to accept that we have an aging population and we are going to need qualified healthcare professionals to help and care for our people, so we better recognise that not all jobs and positions are the same. We need to ensure that we make sufficient provision to have qualified professionals in our healthcare system when we are looking to review the point system.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, you must also consider the health of the people who we are making Caymanians. Will there be a burden on our limited resources? We need to look no further than the growing cost in NGS 55 and HEA 2. Also, when we forecast the future needs of our population and recognise the global shortage of healthcare professionals, will we have enough healthcare professionals to service our people? What will our population be in 5, 10, 20 years from now? These are the issues that we as political leaders must grapple with and prepare our Islands to deal with, which brings me to one of the main topics that I want to talk about — parliamentary reform.

Mr. Speaker, whether we want to accept it or not, we are too reactionary and not forward-looking enough. Despite having a population that can fit in a modern stadium, we have challenges in this country that we shouldn't have. In short, Mr. Speaker, this island is far too blessed for our people to be this stressed. It's as simple as that.

The Honourable Minister of Finance hit the nail squarely on the head when he spoke about setting up ministerial committees. Mr. Speaker, I would go one step further and increase the number of Parliament standing committees. We come down here just about every meeting and we table these reports, and reports, and reports. We table them and then what do we do with them? Those reports contain very valuable information, but we are not sitting down and combing through them properly to see what we can learn from them to prepare for certain things.

Here is something to consider, Mr. Speaker — and I'm going to go off script a little bit. Several weeks ago I was at lunch with a group of people and the topic of conversation was the drop in Bitcoin. Bitcoin, I think, dropped about 30 per cent and lost its value. It went like that [*Snaps fingers*]. They were going crazy because these guys obviously invested in Bitcoin. I didn't, but they did and they were going crazy. I listened to them speculate, I listened to their pain and everything else and eventually, after everyone got what they wanted to get off of their chest, they asked me, what are my views? I kind of smiled and said, you know, I'm listening

to all of you and I wonder how you are going to invest in Bitcoin, [invest] in the market, when you don't even understand how the market works?

The look on their face was kind of like *well Chris dissin' us!* It wasn't meant as a *diss*, Mr. Speaker. What I said to them to kind of explain the market was this — there are certain things in the market that you need to have a basic understanding of outside of the normal supply and demand. There is one thing, more than anything, which people need to understand about the market, one word it comes down to: liquidity. You have to understand liquidity.

Mr. Speaker, we're sitting at this lunch table and I said to them: as a reference, let's say these glasses represent assets. It could be any kind of assets; land, buildings, whatever assets. If we have 100 glasses on this table and there's \$100 in circulation, how much would you portion to each glass? They said, one dollar.

I said, okay. If we went out and increased the money supply to \$200, but there is still only 100 glasses, how much then would you assign to each glass? They said, \$2. I said, okay good. You're with me so far. Nothing of the glass went up, the value of the glass didn't go up, and all that went up was the money supply.

I asked them, what happened the week before? They were dumbfounded. No surprise. I said, the week before the US Government ended their longest shutdown period, 43 days or something like that. For 43 days, Mr. Speaker, the US Government, which is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the economy, was spending no money. That's a lot of money we're talking about. On top of that, for 43 days the US Government was still collecting taxes. For 43 days, the US Government wasn't spending but it was still collecting taxes. Money was coming out. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the Federal Reserve was still continuing their quantitative tightening regime, putting pressures on bank reserve, taking money out of the system.

All that happened in those 43 days meant the amount of liquidity in the market went from \$200 down to like \$150. This is the example I was giving them. Which means that each glass is now worth what? They said, \$1.50. I said that's all. It's just liquidity.

Mr. Speaker, after that conversation and after I came home, it made me pause. I said to myself, who is really looking at Cayman's liquidity? Who is really sitting down and having this discussion and analysing what is going on in our economy. I couldn't help myself, so Mr. Speaker, I went and did my research.

In 2014, the Cayman Islands had a population of 58,000 people. At the end of 2014, we had CI\$95.5 million in circulation and a broad money supply of \$1.2 billion. Remember that now — 2014, 58,000, \$95.5 million of cash issued by CIMA in circulation and overall money supply of \$1.2 billion. Ten years later in 2024, the population increased by 31,000, or 53 per cent, to 89,000 people. At the end of last year, the total amount

of Cayman Islands dollars in circulation increased by \$78.1 million or 82 per cent, to \$173.6 million and the broad money supply increased by \$1.5 billion or 125 per cent, to \$2.7 billion.

In short, over a 10 year period our population went up by 53 per cent, money in circulation went up by 82 per cent and the broad money supply went up by 125 per cent. The question I asked, going back to my previous example, with all that liquidity now in our markets and we are wondering why our people can't afford land? Where do you think the value went? Where do you think all of that money...? We have no one sitting down looking at this.

Mr. Speaker, I raise this issue because I know you know this. Two of the basic policies that drive a country is monetary policy and fiscal policy. For years we have sat down in this Chamber and focused on fiscal policy, and no one is out there looking at monetary policy. No one.

Mr. Speaker, I raise that for a bigger issue. Look at the challenges in the European Union. They got together, they formed an economic union, but what they didn't do was form a political union. The two have to run side by side, in tandem. You cannot have monetary policy without fiscal policy and they're going all over the place. You can't have that.

What we find now, Mr. Speaker, is that when the Caymanian people sit down and wonder what forces out there are driving certain things, these are major decisions that are being made where no one is sitting down there and saying, wait a minute, can we allow this much to go out there?

Mr. Speaker, when you sit down and you understand how banks create money out of thin air, it's even scarier. We talk about cost of living and trying to control cost of living, but every single budget document we bring down here has something in it that we just gloss over, and that is the inflation rate. I think in this budget it was either 2.4 or 2.8 per cent for next year. That's cost of living right there. We can't in one breath talk about dealing with cost of living but then present a document that says we expect inflation to go up. We have pretty much accepted defeat at that point.

It is those kind of issues, Mr. Speaker that creep up on us — that's the same way immigration crept up on us.

The Minister in his debate spoke about the number of PRs that were granted, but have we done any analysis to see what the impact of those PRs will be in 5, 10 or 20 years from now? What are the ages of those individuals? What are their skill sets, their talents? How many dependencies do they have back home? What will the impact be on our education system when those PR holders become Caymanians and their children can now attend public school? These are legitimate questions that we must answer when the Caymanian people ask.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about parliamentary reform, we look at the UK Parliament. In the House of

Commons there is a Treasury Committee that looks at a broad range of economic policies and issues. In the House of Lords there is the Economic Affairs Committee. If you come closer to home, to the United States Congress, Mr. Speaker, in the House of Representatives there is the Financial Services Committee that deals the banks and the Federal Reserves and then there is the US Senate Banking and Housing and Urban Affairs Committee that also looks at broad economic issues and policies. Then there's a joint economic committee of both the US House of Representatives and the Senate where they come together and look at all these economic issues.

The point I'm making, Mr. Speaker is that we cannot continue to govern the way we have been governing.

Mr. Speaker, as we were advancing our Constitution, you insisted that we become a Parliament. This was a big step, moving from a Legislative Assembly to a Parliament, because being a Parliament comes with different responsibilities and a certain feeling, you have now gone to a different level — but we're still governing and managing the same old way. We updated a few things, we updated the Parliamentary Standing Orders, but now we need to really sit down and look at the way we govern.

MPs are getting paid too much and having too much time in between parliamentary sessions, when those sessions should be spent on committees, going through those reports, looking at challenges that are facing this country and preparing for them; and if need be Mr. Speaker, bring in outside expertise from the private sector and say, let's sit down and explain this. It doesn't have to be in public, it can be whichever way we want, but either way we can no longer sit down and govern the same way for the world that we are living in now.

Mr. Speaker, as political leaders, we also have to be aware of something — that we don't create wicked problems, where we think we're fixing one problem and creating another. With this Immigration Bill before us we need to make sure that we don't run the risk of creating a wicked problem, and that's one of the reasons why I'm asking for Parliament oversight reforms.

Mr. Speaker, from a political leadership standpoint we also need to adjust to understand the difference between managing and leading. For too long we have been managing this country on a day to day basis and we have not done a good job, in my opinion — this is not just this Government, this is previous governments — in terms of leading. While managing is about focusing on specific goals, leading is about inspiring your people towards a certain vision and that is one of the things that we need to start working on.

Mr. Speaker, as we discuss this emotive issue of immigration, there are other things that we also need to consider in terms of risk. When you look at AI and at automation, the jobs that we are dependent on for work permit revenue, will those jobs be around in the next 5,

10, or 15 years? Those people who get PR based on those jobs, will those jobs still be around when their time comes to retire; and if so, or if not, will they have sufficient savings or anything else to take care of themselves and not become a future burden for our children and grandchildren to deal with? These are the type of legitimate questions that we need to ask. As I said before, hope is not a policy.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone through this Bill. Is the Bill perfect? No. Do I have questions? Absolutely. Matter of fact, I probably have a trailer-load of questions; but I've also learned in my eight years since being elected, we cannot make the perfect be the enemy of the good. It's a good step. It is a step in the right direction. I know it's not the final piece of legislation that is coming and so it is my intention, Mr. Speaker, to support this Bill. Despite having questions, it is still a positive step forward for bettering our people and giving them more opportunities.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Speaker, in just over a year, my family will celebrate 80 years, or four generations being in Cayman. As I reflect on my own family's journey, I am proud to be a Caymanian and I am proud to have the opportunity to serve my people at this level. I'm only really sad that my father, the seaman, the bartender, didn't have an opportunity to see this, because I know this is something he wanted for me.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to thank your government, the 1988-1992 government that gave me my scholarship. I want to thank yourself; the late Benson Ebanks; Dr. Linford Pierson; and Norman Bodden for creating the policies that gave people like me an opportunity to move into the middle class and make a decent living.

Mr. Speaker, I have a responsibility and a duty to pay forward what was given to me, because as I have said many times, in the end we will not be remembered for what we inherited, we're going to be remembered for what we leave behind.

Mr. Speaker, this is the dangerous part now that my wife worries about when I talk, because I'm going off script again, but the Minister for Planning touched on it when he spoke about *bad mind*. I didn't touch it in my original speech, but as I listened to him, we in this House and the larger Caymanian public need to understand one thing — we need to start supporting each other and we need to start looking out for each other.

Mr. Speaker, I have one request for the Caymanian public and Members in this House, nothing gets under my gall more than to hear people complain about our educational system. Mr. Speaker, they need to stop. They are using that as an excuse to deny our people opportunities and when we get up and we talk about

our own education system, we are basically playing into that same narrative.

Last month we passed the budget and when I sat down and was doing my analysis during the budget time... If you think of the amount of money we spend on a child from reception all the way to sixth form, and then when we turn around and give them another four-year scholarship or maybe even a scholarship for a Masters; from reception to a first degree, do you guys have any idea how much money we're spending per child over that 12, 16 years? More than \$250,000 per child is what the cost comes out to. Do not tell me — or you cannot convince me that after investing \$250,000 in a child, they are not good enough to come out and get an entry level job. Really?

Mr. Speaker, I will show you the wickedness of the system. They graduated from our high school, *oh, Cayman's education system ain't no good, we can't hire them; they are this and this and this*. Okay fine, so you say. Even when they go overseas to North America and Europe and come back with a degree from those countries, they *still* can't get a job! So don't tell me it is education related. It is outright discrimination. Unless we are ready inside this House to put our foot down and have those come to Jesus meetings and run the risk of being called a bully and everything else — *I gon' tell you straight up*, they said I'm a bully.

When I look at these numbers, with one of the lowest Caymanian unemployment rates and the lowest status grants out there, you think I really and truly care that anyone calls me a bully? I am very pleased with my numbers. The only thing I am sorry about is I didn't get a chance to continue driving that number further down.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other Members was talking about managing growth, and again, Mr. Speaker, this is why we need that committee that we talked about in terms of managing growth. I remember someone said to me in a meeting once, "*You know, Chris, there are too many work permits,*" and so I asked the question, *Okay, you want me to stop issuing work permits — which industry do you want me to stop issuing work permits on? When you name the industries, tell me the companies in those industries that you don't want to get it*. See, Mr. Speaker, you can't do that. That is where corruption and everything else comes in now, when Government is sitting down and deciding which industries get permits, which companies get permits and all those kinds of things. It goes against the free market system and that is when these things come in.

This is the reason why we need to have that parliamentary reform, to set up these committees where we can sit down and decide amongst ourselves, you know what, this is where the economy is going, this is the amount, and then we can say to WORC or whichever is the issuing authority at that time, no more than 'X' amount inside it, this is the quota for that. You all can go out and sort who gets what, but this is the quota.

When we sit down and grow this country without any regard, just chasing the almighty dollar, we find ourselves shortened for roads. Just yesterday we saw the same thing, we now need a new submarine cable and we've got all these companies that make all of this money and who has to step in and do it — the government. Everyone comes, they are bringing everybody here, but do they have places for them to live? Do they have schools for their kids to go? All those kinds of things. We just can't continue this free for all in this small island that we have. We have to leave something behind.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing I want to touch on, and I've not heard any Member speak about it yet so I want to bring it to the Minister's attention because there are stats out there for it, is the issue of underemployment.

Mr. Speaker, we have parents who have mortgaged their homes, taken out loans and everything else to give their children opportunities that they themselves couldn't have. They told my mother and my grandmother they could not get that job because they did not have the qualification, so they worked like dogs to make sure that we get an education, only for our children to come back out and get the same jobs that they were doing despite the sacrifices they made. We have qualified Caymanians sitting in entry level positions.

Mr. Minister, I had that number down to around 600. The last numbers I looked at say it is over 2,000 again. I will say to you, go and have those come to Jesus meetings with those people. I know you are capable of doing it, go look them in the eyes and let them understand what the law is and what is required for them to be good corporate citizens in Cayman.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to tell a story out of turn to put it in point. I was working at a particular place — I won't say where, to protect the innocent, and I liked the HR Director. The HR Director was as pro-Caymanian as they come. The boss wanted the HR Director to get rid of an employee. To be fair, the employee was one of those who wasn't really cutting it. I can't say the boss was being unreasonable because I witnessed it myself; the employee wasn't cutting it. I just happened to be in the HR Director's office that day when the boss came in. He was there complaining, *why is this employee still here? Yada, yada, yah.*

This is why it's important to have good, qualified Caymanians in HR positions as a gatekeeper. That HR Director looked at the boss, right in my presence, and said to him, *"You nuh got anything better to do with your time?"* He said, *"You are one of the highest paid persons in this organisation. This lady is one of the lowest paid persons in this organisation and you are worrying about her? You nuh got nothin' to do with your time?"* He said, *"Listen, in every other country around the world you pay taxes or you bribe politicians or whatever to get what you want to get, in Cayman you just have to hire some people that you don't want to hire. That's the tax you pay for doing business in Cayman.*

So here's the plan, I'm not firing them. Get out of my office."

The look on the boss's face was kind of like, okay, and he left. The HR Director just point blank said, *"I am not firing that person. You know, what are they going to go out there and do? What, you want the family to come back and rob you or rob me? Nah, nah, they're staying there. This is not costing us nothing. Consider this the cost of doing business in Cayman."*

Now, in fairness, I will say that the HR Director did go to that Caymanian — and I'll never forget this — and he said to the person, *"Give me your ID, give me this, give me that, whatever. You're fired, go home,"* and the look on their face, they were shocked. Then two minutes later he said, *"Now, that's what a firing looks like. Get your stuff together"*. He gave them back their ID, *"you still have your job, but the next time, I nuh gon' give them back to you. Pull your socks up."*

Sometimes that is what it takes. He defended the person and still went and dealt with the person. The person, in fairness, improved after that. That's one reason I'm actually glad to tell the story, but it requires us, Mr. Speaker, to sit down and have those uncomfortable conversations.

We have recommended people to WORC that we know have gone on to embarrass us too. I can tell you, I'm sometimes ashamed at some of the people I send. I call somebody, I beg them for a favour, the person works very well for two or three weeks, and then the car problems start, the lateness starts and all that kind of stuff after they get the first pay cheque. After a while it does make you look bad, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? That is still the exception to the rule — 98 to 99 per cent of our people are still good, hardworking people.

Every country has people like those, so I don't want anyone to make it sound like it is Cayman alone that has this problem; every country has it. I've travelled to enough countries, I've seen it.

Mr. Speaker, as I close up this debate and I recognise we're going into the Christmas season and everyone is trying to get out of here, I also recognise that in the nature of politics this is an issue where people may become politically mischievous. As you said, in this honourable House, every single one of us in here are Caymanians and we cannot be divided on this issue. This is one issue that must pass unanimously in this House.

I will tell you why the unanimous is important, Mr. Speaker. There was a former Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren. He was known famously for the Warren Commission after the Kennedy assassination, but he was the Chief Justice when the landmark legislation *Brown v. Board of Education* went to the Supreme Court. At the point when he started out, going by the historical records, the court was not leaning in the majority where they were not going to vote to end segregation.

He had to travel somewhere and his driver — he used to love his driver. His driver used to tell him war stories from the Second World War, where they were pinned down and this and that. His driver was a black Army veteran and he had many stories of what happened in Europe and everything else. One morning he had to travel somewhere and when he came out of the hotel, he couldn't find his driver; the car didn't pull up. He went to look for his car and the car was parked in some little bushes, and inside there he saw the driver sleeping in the back seat. He said to him, "*Why are you sleeping in the back seat?*" He said, "*Sir, there is no hotel that will allow me to stay there for 50 miles and I didn't want to go so far and then not be able to make it back to pick you up.*"

At that moment, he realised that something is fundamentally wrong and he started going around lobbying Justice after Justice to get them to change their mind, meeting with each of them individually. He got it down to where they had eight yeses, but there was still one dissent; one Judge that wouldn't budge. The morning when they went up there and they were doing the presentation — Thurgood Marshall at that time was the Judge, he also went on to be the first black US Supreme Court Justice — and they did their stuff and they were given the ruling, he looked at the Judge one last time and the Judge nodded his head to tell him, yes, and the court was unanimous.

They needed that unanimous vote to end segregation, because they recognised that one dissenting vote would have given people the belief that there are Justices of the Supreme Court that believe in segregation. This, as I said before, Mr. Speaker is an emotive issue and it is one that many people will seize on to kind of create strife and create division. Every one of us in this House knows someone who is new to our shores, or are not from our shores, whom we would like to stay here; but equally, we also know some that we would like to see gone. Everyone wants the ones that they like to stay, and the ones that they don't like to go. We don't have that luxury. We need to make sure at the end of the day that we are fair, we are just, and we're balanced.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to people who want to use this issue, don't do it. That, more than anything, would be un-Caymanian. Instead, I'll ask them to remember the words of one of my favourite songs from Black Uhuru. They had a Grammy winning song *Solidarity*. The first line says, and I won't sing it because I cannot sing:

"Everybody wants the same thing, don't they?"

Everybody wants a happy end.

They want to see the game on Saturday,

They want to be somebody's friend.

Everybody wants to work for a living,

They wanna keep their children warm,

Everybody wants to be forgiven,

They want a shelter from the storm.

Look at me, I aint your enemy

We walk on common ground.

We don't need to fight each other.

What we need, what we need is solidarity."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, Members.

As I wait on the lectern to start my contribution, I want to say that we are truly at a crucial turning point in Cayman's growth and development. I'm really happy to be one of the last speakers in this debate, because you get a good sample of everyone's thinking in respect to this space.

Mr. Speaker, it was my intention to allow the words of my honourable Leader to guide the direction of the Opposition on behalf of the Official Opposition, but I think I'm going to just add a couple more points to what has already been said. I think that we've had a very good balance of viewpoints thus far and covered probably one of the most difficult things that has been highlighted thus far, and which I can see the Government has tried its best to do some damage control as almost every single Member of the Government ensured that they said that they're not anti expat. Now, Mr. Speaker, there's a reason for that. No one over here said they were anti expat.

What has happened, Mr. Speaker, is that throughout the journey of this discussion, the tone that was delivered was one that created 'us versus them'. This didn't happen by itself. It's a simple reality.

Mr. Speaker, no one will ever condemn any Member for standing up for the good people of the Cayman Islands. I'm a politician too, but more importantly I love my people, so of course we're going to all stand up for what we believe is right. There will be disagreements in respect to how to go about fixing that, but one thing that I don't think anyone would agree with is creating an environment where people feel like they're not wanted.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable Member that last spoke really got into the crux of the realities of how our economy works and that's why tone is so important, more so than the substance of this Bill, because I'm going to say outright — the Bill is good. There needs to be some changes. There are some things that I'm going to oppose in it individually, like some things [regarding] right to marriage and right to family life. I'll explain that and you'll see based on my proposed amendments, because the Standing Orders don't allow me to speak on and pre-empt those, but you'll see what I mean.

Fundamentally, the Bill is right and it is time; you're right. It is time to start making a stand, but it is also right to understand the economy and society that we built out of nothing. Mr. Speaker, my good colleague

and friend highlighted the fact that our forefathers were so ingenious with their growth and development of a little mosquito island, quite smart. Used the fact that we are a very welcoming society, used the economic opportunities of other countries going through quite similar to what we're doing now, feeling the pressures of the outside world and decided to take drastic actions, and people fled. While our forefathers said, *well, maybe we can start something here*, and they magically worked with others who are not of the land to create a very unique legislative structure, being an overseas territory with the foundation of the Queen and the solidarity of the British Arm, political stability and protection of the pound; what a beautiful place to set up shop. Our forefathers knew what they were doing, they didn't do it by themselves.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Our foremothers too.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: And our foremothers. Thank you, Madam [former] Premier.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: [Laughter] Say fore parents.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Fore parents. They understood that we didn't have any natural resources, unlike our neighbours in Jamaica, back in the day they had bauxite and other Caribbean Islands had plantains, sugar and all the rest of it. We were rather unique. We did have some tradable stuff. We traded rope and we traded turtle shells — which is illegal today. [We were] good ship makers and most of our trade was actually our human capital, our hardworking seamen who went away to sea to send back home money. That's how this country made money.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Iron men and wooden ships.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Iron men and wooden ships. Our forefathers took something, made out of nothing, and then on top of that, while they were making that in the time of all that money going around, the world, they saw *"Wow, what a beautiful beach. Some nice people! They're so welcoming,"* and the combination of all of that is what created what we have today, because what we have is a service-based economy. We don't sell products. We sell legislative structure, we sell vehicles that allow the world's economy to operate through our laws, and those companies that register here need supply labour because we don't have enough Caymanians to do it; and in tandem with that, tourism.

What is tourism? Tourism is our people. Yes, back in the '80s every condominium, every hotel was

filled with Caymanians because the number of condos and hotels that we had at that time could facilitate the population of Caymanians that we had, but every time we continue to say that, nobody talks about the number of jobs that are actually in the tourism industry and the reality is there's never going to be a point when they are all Caymanians in the industry. I hate to hear it, Mr. Speaker, because people are manipulating the truth.

When we say, what about Jamaica? What about Bahamas? What about Barbados? The truth is Mr. Speaker, they're not as lucky as us! We have more jobs than we have Caymanians. It's a bittersweet situation when you have some members unemployed. Of course, you're going to see Jamaicans everywhere in Jamaica because over 95 per cent of their population is Jamaicans. Of course, you're going to see that in Bahamas, because over 80 per cent of the population there is Bahamian. Have we looked at our ratios here? Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me right, our population numbers, Caymanians compared to the overall population is less than 50 per cent now. I think that happened within the last administration.

Mr. Speaker, as we challenge ourselves to deal with the immigration and labour issue — I would say rights to becoming Caymanian and labour, which equals to that of immigration — we have to examine what the reality is in this country before we make decisions that could ultimately give us a worse problem than we're trying to fix. I think my good colleague tried to highlight a little bit of that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know there are Members who are going to probably say that I'm criticising the Bill. Far from it. Matter of fact, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Minister for his hard work and his commitment. Nobody's going to question that he's not committed to it, I'll tell you that. Even when he's criticised, he's still at it. I congratulate him for that and I congratulate the Government for dealing with this Bill.

By all means, I'm not going to make myself be a hypocrite because most of you are fully aware and have mentioned that the last administration created the catalyst for the start of what we're dealing with today in respect of the immigration momentum. I think the Honourable Minister himself acknowledged that 80 per cent of the current Bill was not created by him or that administration, but merely by the Members who were a part of the last administration along with the technical team. I think it was the Honourable Minister Rankine or Honourable Nickolas DaCosta who mentioned, *the fingerprints of those amazing civil servants are all over this Bill*. To be truthful with you, last administration, this administration, none of us should take any credit for it — *it is they who did the hard work*.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I give credit where credit is due, but I do not

like it when the administration talks about, "*oh, let's not make this political.*" Come on now. Let's not pretend now like we didn't do a couple of jabs in this debate about, "*well, it's being done now under this administration!*" and this, and that, and so forth. You cannot say you don't want to be political and then throw politics into it; can't work.

Mr. Speaker, we have tried our endeavour best to not do that with this Bill. Matter of fact, my good Honourable Leader of the Opposition instructed me to go to the Minister once the Bill was gazetted to sit down and talk about a unified approach to supporting this Bill and telling our viewpoints. I personally reached out to him and said, "*Minister, this is one of those things we can't use as a political football. Let's sit and meet.*" It wasn't him who reached over to this side, it was us reaching over to that side, so let's set the record straight.

We thanked the Honourable Minister and his team for presenting to us. We offered our concerns and in the spirit of negotiation and discussion, just like how you go out and talk to the public about things that you think would be acceptable; we did that, [though] we didn't get much feedback from what we thought needed to be changed. We were promised to get some other information. I don't know what happened. We expressed the fact that we think the Regulations should be in tandem with this Bill because it is a big piece of the puzzle of these amendments to this Bill so we can understand it. Still haven't seen the draft yet. Mr. Speaker, I dare say, I don't think that most of the Members on that side have even seen the draft based on what I'm hearing.

Mr. Speaker, we were also promised that we would have the new amendments that they announced that they were going to have in the last sitting in early November; 3.5 weeks ago. We didn't get them until 11:48 in the morning, which was 25 hours before the Parliament debate. Now, in the spirit of togetherness, it's fair to allow us to be a part of the process. We don't want to be confrontational because we all agreed that these things need to be addressed, but as the old saying goes, *it is not what you do but how you do it that matters* and we didn't get that opportunity and now we're here scrambling to try to even understand the amendments and the context that they're in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Government is going to respond and say, "*Well, we asked them to do a meeting at 1 o'clock the day before the sitting of the House to offer an explanation,*" after promising 3.5 weeks ago that they would give us the amendments. That's what they're going to try to do to cover and do damage control as to not doing this process properly, but it is what it is. We're going to have to make do and try to figure [it] out because, again, I say, as I've said before, legal drafting and implementation of legislation is a very complicated matter and I can bet you, Mr. Speaker, that some of the Members of this honourable House probably can't even interpret the messaging itself in the amendments. That's why they get legal and the Honourable Attorney General to ask legal drafting to say,

"*Well, what does that mean?*" when we are trying to deliver 'X', because we are policymakers, we're not legal drafters. That's why we have to examine to say this is what we want to accomplish, can you help us write this in a legal structured way that can hold the test of the courts through this sentence structure, within this clause, within this Bill? That's a certain skill set that is necessary.

It's important that not only the public but also the Opposition understands that you can't do it 25 hours beforehand, but there I go nit-picking as I always do. God forbid that I want proper process to be done, but Mr. Speaker, Parliament was created and the conventions of the process of Parliament are done for a reason, so that the final result can hold to the test of time. That's why parliamentary proceedings mandate that you declare amendments within a certain period of time.

It also ensures that any clauses in amendments to the Bill are not substantial. Members are asking me, "*Well, what is this amendment about withdrawing this?*" when you have Members proposing brand new sections that were not even a part of the first original Bill into the amendment section, and they know better! You cannot create a substantially new section, a brand new proposal, in a Bill that has not been seen by the public. It is against convention; forget about the Opposition, even if the Opposition were to agree to it, it's not about that. When we start to circumvent the processes of Parliament is when we find ourselves in positions where we make mistakes, and then all the filtering doesn't happen and it gets down to the courts.

I can promise you this, there are many firms out there sitting and waiting to find the loopholes in the law. Matter of fact, we have met with organisations who have already said, "*Oh, we are already starting to find some loopholes in the law.*" Ready and waiting. Am I lying, Mr. McTaggart?

That's why it's important to do the process right. It's not that we don't want you to do the process, matter of fact, we helped create most of what is being presented here today, so the narrative to think that we are going to oppose it is silly. It's not what you do but how you do it that is important, so it can stand the test of time.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to read a little story for my colleagues. It's a story about the architect and the apprentice. Mr. Speaker, there was a renowned architect, let's call him Mr. McLaughlin, who was tasked with building the foundation of the new city's archives, a structure that needed to last for centuries. He assigned the critical task of mixing the high strength mortar to his two apprentices, one Mr. Rankine and the other, Mr. Myles. The required mortar was complex, demanding a 3:1:1 ratio of sand, cement and volcanic ash, and it needed to be mixed for a full 40 minutes to achieve the necessary chemical bonds and strength.

Mr. Myles rushed mixing the mortar for only 20 minutes. It looked ready, so he rushed to the construction team and began laying the first courses of stone, while Mr. Rankine stuck strictly to the instructions he was given. He set the timer for 40 minutes, allowing the materials time to properly hydrate and bond their molecule levels. It took twice as long but the mortar was mixed perfectly.

A month later, Mr. McLaughlin inspected the foundation of the work. Mr. Myles' rushed mortar crumbled very easily, the bonds were weak, while Mr. Rankine's mortar was rock hard and unyielding. The architect McLaughlin stated, "*Myles, you have saved 20 minutes, but you lost the city centuries of structural integrity.*" That's that integrity I'm talking about for the courts in any legislation that we make, so we don't get sued or people can't get what they want because of a mishap within legislation.

Speed is meaningless if the result cannot endure. Rankine understood that proper pace is the cornerstone of quality. Mr. Speaker, this is something that I think that we need to understand further in this Parliament.

Now this lesson is for all of us in here, as I understand the pressure to deliver quickly, Mr. Speaker. We all feel the urge to be like Mr. Myles, the apprentice who thought he could cut the 40-minute mixing time for the mortar to 20 minutes. He was fast, yes, but the foundation ultimately was weak because he did not pay attention to the crucial process.

Mr. Speaker, I dare say we should be like Mr. Rankine who took the full time and respected the requirement for perfect lasting bonds so the foundation that we build on will be enduring.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this principle of meticulous work over reckless speed is not a modern thing, it's ancient. It's why King Solomon's temple took seven years to build. I'm not suggesting that this Bill takes seven years to make, but I know it would not have killed this Government for us to come back in January so there wouldn't be any conflicts or questions, because in Committee Stage, I can promise you there are going to be some Members who are surprised with the clauses and what they actually mean.

The Bible tells us that every single stone was perfectly cut and shaped at the quarry before it was brought to the site so that no sound of a hammer or chisel was heard during the final assembly — that's in our Bible in 1 Kings 6:7. Let us not rush these things.

I'm going to tell you an example of what I mean by rushing, Mr. Speaker. We all know that I have asked the Government publicly, directly to the Minister and the Government, to paint me the picture of Cayman in 10 years after all of these reforms are completed. What will it be like for the labour market? What will it be like for our numbers of Caymanians? What will it be like for the opportunity and journey to become Caymanian? Tell me about the restrictions. What will Cayman look

like after your reforms are completed? I am yet to hear what that picture looks like.

Mr. Speaker, it was sad that the honourable Member for Bodden Town West had to highlight the fact that nobody is going through the numbers, the rates, and expressing that as the reason for these changes. The other part, Mr. Speaker is the fact that there's an expectation to follow blindly without the regulations being attached to this. The sad part is that much of what is being sold that will be fixed in this amendment, is not going to be fixed in this amendment. I know it is the Government's intention holistically to fix these problems over time, along with the points system and the regulations in further amendments, but let's not sell to the public something that is not real!

Mr. Speaker, the one good thing — no, there are many good things about this Bill, but what this Bill will do is strengthen the WORC Department from addressing the loopholes within the element of pathway to citizenship and the rights awarded to them through the passport and status, and even permanent residency. Which gives me an opportunity to talk about the Bill and its positive points, because I have to get back to that shortly.

This Bill is good because it helps with the information sharing. It deals with the validation of the Bills and the actions of the current legislative framework. It strengthens the administrative enforcement ability of the department and the Director. It makes it longer for people to get status and a Cayman Islands passport, because there is serious abuse of the system there. It also helps deal with the marriage of convenience fight which I'm very proud of because it's probably one of the biggest violations that we have. It also addresses the rollover policy with the civil service. Those are just some of the main things and I am certain that we will further go through more of the things that are positive about the Bill, but those are the fundamentals. Much of what is being talked about is labour and the promise of what these amendments will do to labour, and I'm still confused to how. I'll dive into that a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, a question was posed to me on Wednesday morning. I was on the radio giving the preamble of us coming here, and unfortunately, I had left the radio show already so I couldn't get to answer it. I haven't answered it at all since the very day I put up that billboard, because everybody goes, *Well, Mr. Bryan, you were the one with the 'Immigration Reform Now' sign*, and I am very happy I was the one who started the spark, very proud of that.

The honourable Member for West Bay West said she doesn't understand what happened. The sign came down, disappeared after a while and she was unsure whether the Members in my Government didn't support me or if I gave up on it, legitimate questions. Then she obviously, wanted to say, *Well, we took it up and we carried it forward*. I think she should recognise, and I think she has, that it's not politically smart to big up the other side.

I want to remind her, the main reason why most of those changes couldn't come to this Parliament is because four members of her current Government refused to allow us to bring anything sensitive to this Parliament. Let's not forget! One was your Premier, another one being your Minister of Health, and the others being two of your [parliamentary secretaries]. We couldn't bring it. Let's be honest about the truth.

My point is Mr. Speaker, the reason why I haven't answered that question is because I know, just like she said, it is complex. It's a very complex problem and that's why you have to be ever so diligent with the fixing and reform of this. For me immigration has always been two things, the pathway to becoming Caymanians and permanent residents in this country and the other part, labour. You see the labour part here? *Unna nuh gah that right*. My humble opinion.

This Bill will strengthen the department to stop many people from becoming Caymanian, which is the number one problem. That's why I'm proud of this Bill, because we have to make sure that we protect what we know as Caymanians and as Cayman. Truth be told, we talk about population control, but I don't know how *unna gonna* stop that one. How are you going to stop a Caymanian from opening a business and saying "*I need more labour*"? I heard the honourable Member, my Colleague, the last speaker, talk about restrictions in a free market system. Good luck with that one. Good luck with that one.

Mr. Speaker, talking about population controls, we don't have a population problem, you know? We don't. What we have is a 'lack of planning' problem. What we have is our forefathers worked — and you were there too, you were one of the persons who gave us good guidance and they never followed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No, he wasn't a part of that group.

The gazettals in the forward planning for Cayman, if they were listened to from back then, much of the congestion that we have today probably wouldn't be here. The road, for example, which we continue to still want to get to Frank Sound, which caused much of the congestion.

Mr. Speaker, I will give you an example of something I used at one of the debates when I was Minister of Tourism at a conference. Of us in this Parliament, [including] two executive members, you Mr. Speaker, and about nine members of staff, about 30 people — if 30 of us went into the small committee room, it would probably feel a little bit congested, but if all of us were in our own spaces where we normally sit, where we normally work, two different sections of eating, two different spots of sitting, it doesn't feel congested at all.

The reason why we feel congested is because everyone gets up in the morning, goes one direction

and when they get off of work, they go the other direction, every single day, in and out. You can have the same population you have here [now] if we planned this country properly and we wouldn't feel any congestion at all.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of going to Bermuda and people talked about how restrictions of cars is the big thing that reduced congestion. Truth be told, I sat with the Minister. He said, "*Kenneth, yes, restriction helps, but it's not only that.*" He said he's been to the Cayman Islands, but he just doesn't understand how we developed, everybody going in the same direction every day in the morning and in the evening. Everybody works in the West and everybody lives in the East. Of course, you're going to have congestion. If we spread out properly and developed properly not everybody would have to come to town — so the population is not the problem. We have enough land, we just haven't developed properly.

Mr. Speaker, I hear them talking about this legislation fixing population controls — tell me how? I want to agree with you. I have already agreed that this legislation will address some things. It will address your ability to get a Cayman passport, which is being abused. They have extended the time period to make sure you don't have access to that [too soon], because yes, many people get married or whatever and they get their Cayman passport, then cut, they're gone.

I'm glad that the Director will have that strength, but I am also concerned that we don't know what the clarity is to the discretion by the Director. There is no criteria [for] at the discretion of the Director to revoke. The Director is someone I went to school with Mr. Speaker, probably the most honest person I've ever met. He was the nicest guy in school. You couldn't even be mad at him.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: And he's from Cayman Brac, so you know he's super nice, right? I am certain that he's going to do a good job, but it's not about him, it's about the legislation that we create. God forbid he retires tomorrow and says, *you know what? I'm done*. I don't know who the next person is going to be, but it's not about the individual, it's about the process and I don't understand how the discretion is going to be up to him. Suppose he gets up one day and says, *I don't feel so good and I don't like this applicant. Matter of fact, wasn't he the guy who was looking at my wife? Get rid of him*. How can you give carte blanche discretion without criteria to that? I've asked for that in the meeting. Did we get it? No. If you took that to the court, the court would throw it out! You have to have some guidelines. I've asked for them. Have I seen them? No.

Mr. Speaker, it's not that this Bill isn't going to pass, we are all going to vote for it. No politician in this House is going to say no to this. It would be political

suicide, but that's not the point. The point is that when we pass legislation in this House, we've got to know where we are going and we have to be honest with ourselves about some of the things that we're promising the people.

I am very glad that we are fixing the 'pathway to Caymanian' part, but we're not fixing the labour part because the truth be told, no matter how you check it, you have no control over who the business community decides to hire. I've been talking about this from when I came in the very first time in 2017. I asked that this country needs a national jobs criteria list that is agreed upon by private sector and government so we can have a harmonious approach to things. If you think in a free market system that you can tell a business owner — and by the way, just so you know, those business owners that you're talking bad about, 95 per cent of them are Caymanian-owned. Remember that.

How can you go up to them and say, listen, you must hire Mr. Rankine or Mr. Bryan or Mr. McField? He is going to say, "*You can't tell me [that].*" You can say I won't get the outside labour, you can do that, but you cannot mandate them to hire Caymanians. I'm still waiting for you to tell me how you are going to force them to hire Caymanians.

The truth be told, Mr. Speaker, what you need is an incentive programme and I'm going to use a very interesting word — an ability to *inspire* the business community to partner with you and incentivise them to be more focused on Caymanians. That's what you need to do.

You need to create an environment where the business is successful because whether we believe it or not, if the business community suffers in any capacity... You think jobs for Caymanians are hard now? We're not even going to get into the tax revenue fees yet. My good friend can't wait for that debate to come. Because if you pressure them... Let me rephrase that, because I don't want us to think that the Minister cannot say, this is the direction of the government and we're going to hold fast to that. There's nothing wrong with that. You do need to send a message. You heard the honourable Member for Bodden Town West talk about the fact of our hardball approach after COVID and reopening the country. As I said before, it's not what you do, but how you do it.

Now, let me ask this Parliament one question, where did this 'us versus them' come out from? Every single Member ensured they said "*This is not about 'us versus them'.*" *Who unna responding to?* What are you responding to? You know what they're responding to, Mr. Speaker? In our community right now, there is a feeling that this administration is creating an environment [that is] anti-business and anti-foreigner. I didn't make it up! It's confirmed to me when I hear all Members strategically make sure that in their speeches [they say], we are not an anti-expat government, because you're feeling the pressure. Where did that come

from? You know where it came from? Irresponsible comments. I am not going to shy away from this.

Mr. Speaker, when you are a leader, there are many things that you want to say that you can't say. You simply just cannot say it, even if you feel it. When you speak on behalf of the Government, you can't be afforded the opportunity to say "*If you don't like it, get on the plane and leave.*" It does not work that way, especially when we are in a society that, unfortunately, depends heavily on outside labour! Especially when it affects our competitiveness as a jurisdiction. We are already expensive as it is. That may not sound good to some, some like to hear the talk of "*Get rid of 'em!*"

The example that was probably used best, I found it so funny, was the one by the honourable Member for Bodden Town East. He said the monkeys were so happy when the farmers died because the farmers used to kick them out of their fields all the time, until the next year when there was no corn in the fields for them to eat. They didn't realise it was the farmers that were creating their food for them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't want anyone to be left with the idea that I think that because outside investment and workers are here that we must suck up to them, but we have to recognise that we are in a delicate place. If Cayman becomes a jurisdiction that is seen to be anti-everybody; and the political atmosphere is 'we don't need you, if you don't like it get out of here'; and the cost of doing business is so expensive; you ever heard of the term capital flight? It is real. We're having it already through technology outsourcing. I haven't heard anyone say anything about how we're going to address that from a labour perspective.

It is real and we cannot afford to have that tone. Matter of fact, I know that we're not that way. That's not who we are. We were built on the notion of togetherness; not immigration, but integration. What we need to do is inspire those who come here to say it is your responsibility to be a part of our society together. Break down the silos of the gated communities. West Bay Road needs to understand what's happening in Central, so when they are poor and they can't eat it becomes a problem for the bigger society. We need to inspire everyone to be together, not cause a division, because we didn't cause it on this side! You can pretend all you want, but each and every one of you Members know you're feeling it out there and it came from somewhere. It's irresponsible behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the business community is even talking about it. We met with them and you know what they said? Many of the associations, I'm not even going to say which one because they are so frightened. Here's what they said, "*Guys, we are afraid to say anything.*" But why? "*There's a feeling of a Trump-ism happening and we don't want the Government to come after us.*" Mr. McTaggart, am I lying?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Unfortunately not.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Unfortunately not. You might not believe me, but you'll believe him.

An Hon. Member: They say it to all Opposition.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: They say it to all Opposition?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Well, according to the Minister of Finance, that's just a tool that they use to get the politicians to be puppets.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay, all right.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to know that we're in a very beautiful position and we can fix it — as much as I like to shout and scream. Everyone knows that I'm very animated because I want to make sure you understand what I'm saying. I'm not afraid to say what I have to say.

Let's look at other jurisdictions who can be successful with larger populations than themselves, Dubai. The United Arab Emirates has over 80 per cent of their population being non-nationals. I'm not saying that we shouldn't be worried about our population growth, but that's not where the fundamental problem is. The problem is how many people are becoming Caymanians. That's why I said, why are we not focusing on the points system first? When are we going to hear about the points system, Mr. Speaker? We're selling this vision and dream of the future, but we haven't heard even the draft of that yet.

We haven't seen the regulation that would support this current set of amendments so we can understand what the ultimate outcome will be and don't create a pile of legislation that is not supportive of the efficiency to deliver the labour component. Labour is so essential to our service-based economy and when businesses believe that they cannot get the available labour they need, they get scared, they don't invest, they don't expand and things happen. Plus, it's going to get a little bit more expensive starting January 1st for them.

Yes, we have to make sure that they sort out the Caymanian component of the labour that they are getting first. Let's speak about that for a minute. Let's talk about the reality of the unemployment numbers, because they're selling this idea that there is one pile of hundreds of millions of Caymanians unemployed. I think the person who best highlighted the real problem is the Member for Bodden Town West, who said the

problem is actually under-employment, along with unemployment, where Caymanians are not being given the right mobility up the ladder.

You'll notice that from the two parts of the immigration concerns I talked about, labour and path to citizenship, you're not going to have any argument for me on that side. If you can block every single one of them off, outside of being married to a Caymanian and Caymanian by birth, you have my full approval.

However, labour, which has to do with our economy, has to be managed right. Mr. Speaker, according to the ESO stats, the unemployment rate as per last year was 4.6 per cent. I can't find the numbers, but I know them almost off by heart. I'll find it. Here we go. This accounted for 1,048 Caymanians. In our labour pool of 59,393 persons working, 33,389 of them are non-Caymanian. Let's just say we did resolve the problem of all these unemployed persons. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister for getting 70 people employed through that drive through the hotel industry. We did exactly the same thing. We didn't make as big of a deal about it, but congratulations. Keep that commitment on.

However, if we were to solve the unemployment of those 1,048 people, which is 4.6 per cent, you're still going to have 32,339 people who are non-Caymanian. The reality is that we need that outside labour and I think the Government has accepted that they are not anti-outside labour, but the percentage of persons underemployed is the part that we need to focus on heavily, allowing them to have more monies available to them with this high cost of living.

You cannot force employers. You can say you won't get something, but in a free market system you can't say "*I'm telling you that you must hire this person*". As much as I would love to be able to do that, we are not a dictatorship, so you have to do it in spirit, in tandem, together with the business community.

Mr. Speaker, here's my question: Who decides who is qualified from who is not? I think that is the crux of the story when we have Caymanians coming back home from school or Caymanians who are here on island already, coming out of high school. I've been trying to tackle this issue about employment ever since I got into this House. The free market system is probably the most difficult one. I want to tell you this, you might not like what I'm saying today, but I wouldn't be surprised [if] four years from now when we bring up the ESO stats, the figures and the percentages are going to be exactly the same.

I'm hoping that I'm wrong. I think the area that you can probably strengthen the best is the underemployment. You can probably bring down the unemployment a little bit, because to be honest with you, from global standards that unemployment number is actually pretty low. You will always have some people who don't want to work for one reason or another. That sounds terrible but I'm quite sure of that. That's why we sug-

gested for the NiCE programme to be year-round, because like the good Minister said, Honourable Minister Jay Ebanks, he was not surprised that around 650 people showed up to the NiCE programme, ready to work, young and old.

What would be interesting to see is if it was a year-round programme, how many of them would actually stay in the programme, as opposed to those who want to come for two weeks? Can you get somebody to work for two weeks? Oh yeah, but this is what employers keep on talking to us about. You hear it, Mr. Rutty, *“Oh, they come to work for two weeks and they're gone.”* Do you think I like to talk about these uncomfortable things? No, but it's a reality and as a former business owner, you know this is what you have to deal with. As Cayman business owners we're talking about it. Yes, we want them to play their part, but it's not like some of these business owners aren't out there trying to give them opportunities. As a matter of fact, Mr. Rutty, I know that you've done it and you've had experiences where persons have come and said, *“Boy, I trying with this person”*.

The Speaker: Member for George Town Central, this is the fourth time now you have referred to another Member by his name. You have to address them by either their ministerial status or their constituency. Thank you.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker I do apologise, you're 100 per cent correct as per the Standing Orders. I apologise to the Member as well, the Honourable Deputy Premier.

Mr. Speaker, my example was that the Honourable Deputy Premier is a person who understands fully what I'm talking about. It isn't good to say, but it's something that we have to recognise is truthful. Are there malicious employers out there? Yes. Yes, there are, and I hope that the enforcement arm can go find every one of them and lock them up. Fine them to pieces, you have my full support.

Mr. Speaker, can this Government say they have given the Minister the support necessary for the enforcement arm? I went through this with the budget for him and asked them. I said, you have not increased the staffing levels, you have not increased their budget to do the enforcement arm, so how are they going to fix it? Do you know what the number one concern was from the business community with these changes, fees put aside? It wasn't that they were going to be changes, you know, [it was] whether they were going to be efficient enough to deliver them! Now, we are going to ask for all of these changes, expecting the hardworking staff at WORC to deal with potential challenges and new operational systems when they have a software system right now that is not even working! I asked the Minister to reflect on his Ministry and ask his team what I am talking about.

What's going to happen, Mr. Speaker, without the support necessary, you're going to find yourself in the same problem eight months from now. I'm going to bring it up on the Floor of Parliament to say, *has your efficiency increased at all by these new changes?* I'm going to say to you that they won't, because there is no budget. I can understand that they don't want to expand the civil service any further with any other members. Fine, put them on contract until we at least get through the ironing out of the kinks in this new legislation and then you can release them in a year, but you cannot say to me that with these changes, you're not going to have little bumps and so forth throughout the implementation of these.

I asked the Minister specifically. I said, *“Minister, do you think that you're going to have enough to deliver this?”* The efficiency of the labour market is a key component to success of the market which hires Caymanians as well. Also, 95 per cent of those business owners are Caymanian. I know that sometimes we don't like the rich ones— *“Oh, he rich, he do this,”* but he's still Caymanian, or she's still Caymanian.

By the way, 60-odd per cent of businesses in our society are small business owners. Mr. Speaker, I have serious concerns about the ability to deliver the efficiency expected in this. The part that is being sold is that these changes will make it more efficient.

Mr. Speaker, forgive me, one second.

[Short pause]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, let me get off my ranting for a little bit and talk about something that is a little bit more sensitive in my mind.

Mr. Speaker, there's one section in this Bill that I brought to the attention of the Minister and his support team and it is on page 22 of the Bill. I see Members suggesting that they're in full support of all parts of this Bill and I will be calling for a division when we get to Committee Stage on this section, because I do not support it. I am speaking for Kenneth Vernon Bryan.

On page 22 under clause 10, it talks about the amendment to section 28 of the current Act. This part in layman's terms plans to change the current process for persons who are married to a Caymanian, who normally would be able to get status at the seventh year but it can be revoked until the tenth year, and then after that it's irrevocable. I expressed my concern about the fact that a married couple who are genuinely in love... We talk about “genuine marriages”, I heard the Honourable Minister for Cayman Brac West speak about how the genuine marriages will be respected. I think I quoted you right.

However, now we're about to say to persons who are married, your partner cannot get status until the fifteenth year. Currently it's until the seventh year. I know some people [will say] *“Yeah!”* If you're not in a marriage with a non-Caymanian, it doesn't bother you.

I want the Honourable Deputy Premier to examine this for a minute because he made a very good example just last evening. He gave us wonderful examples of his marriage to his amazing wife, whom I know, a very sweet, loving person who has embraced Cayman as her own. Can't get any more Caymanian than that. Sometimes I wonder if she wasn't born in East End.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: She grew up there.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: She grew up there.

I wonder how the Honourable Deputy Premier would feel if, when he married her, his country, his Government said she can't be a part of this family until she'd been married to him for 15 years. You know what bothers me the most, Mr. Speaker? Not the partner, you know—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I don't need no help, partner. I don't need help, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, here is the part that I have a problem with, not the Caymanian spouse who would be upset by this, not even the person who is getting married to the Caymanian partner, it is the children.

Here we go, Mr. Speaker, let me give you an example. A couple marries, they have two children, one girl, one boy, 18 months apart. I think every one of us in this room would have probably experienced this, maybe the older ones not so much, but the teasing about "*Oh yeah, well you nuh even from ya, you nuh even Caymanian!*", in high school. You remember that? "*Jamaican! Get from ya, you nuh even Caymanian!*"

Think about this for a second, a 12 year old getting into high school and the teasing starts, because that's where it happens, in school. That's where the emotional component of mental health really comes down to play, right? That child is there, just sitting down there — beautiful child, well mannered, comes from a good family — hearing their friends talk about, "*Oh, you ol' foreigner! Your parents nuh even Caymanian!*" Then that child goes, "*I've never been exposed to this type of discussion before, what are they talking about?*" Then they go home, "*Mummy and daddy, daddy, you Caymanian, right?*" and the good Deputy Premier says, "*Yes, of course, born and raised!*" Navel string somewhere up inside Town; as much as you've been living in East End, your navel string is in Town. "*But mummy is originally from somewhere else.*" "*So my mummy nuh Caymanian?*" "*No, pumpkin, not quite yet.*" That child goes back to school, afraid of the conversation and being teased that their parent is not Caymanian; and this is a genuine, loving marriage.

Now, here's the thing. Currently we're giving it to them at seven years. The Government, through the Minister, and what we were told in Opposition, was that the reason why they want to expand it to 15 years is they found that there was a pattern whereby people were leaving their marriages at literally one week after the tenth year, which is the time when you can no longer be revoked. Up to 10 years, it can be revoked for one reason or another — marriage unstable, fishy business, blah-blah-blah. Okay, well, let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. If that's what you're trying to fix, extend the period of revocability to fifteen years. Why would you take away the opportunity for a family to become one in the Cayman Islands?

I'll give you another example. Married couple, forget the children because it seems like we don't care about children and how they emotionally feel, because trust me that happens. I had to deal with it with my own two children. I married a foreigner and am very proud of whom I married.

An Hon. Member: She feels the same way?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I don't know.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: My two children have to listen [to that]. Many of us in this room have expressed that feeling from having a partner who is not Caymanian, but we're changing the legislation to make a further divide in it, unnecessarily. That's the problem. I had to have a conversation with my children, "*Well, you know, mummy is from the UK, but don't worry, mummy is a part of the family.*" I literally had to take the paper and say, "*See this paper, this paper says mummy is a Caymanian,*" because children think about stuff like that. The worst part about it, at the seventh year after a marriage it's not so bad, because the average age of a child will be around eight or so, and by then they're not exposed to that yet, they're still in primary school.

You heard what the Member said, sometimes we try to fix one problem and you create another. I brought it up and I said, guys, what are we trying to fix here? Are we trying to further divide the Caymanian families when most of us in here have some descendant from somewhere else?

Some of my people marry some of the craziest people, but I can't tell them who to marry. I cannot. What we are doing though in this amendment is giving the discretion to the Director to be able to examine marriage of convenience. That's the reason why we are doing this now, because we're worrying and we're thinking of it from a place of every marriage is a marriage of convenience. Not all marriages are marriages of convenience, some people are actually still in love — like you, and I... and let's stop there.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: We cannot assume that every marriage has to be treated like a marriage of convenience.

I was just about to say, before I went off track — I still have 56 minutes to go. I have plenty of time. Mr. Speaker, I was just going to say another example of the effect of this.

Married eight years, finally got some deposit, me and my wife are ready to go. We want to go buy a house. First time Caymanian homeowner. Yippee, we saved, we worked really hard together as a family! One child, two years old, we need a home now, we need to get out of the apartment. We go and we apply. I can't afford it by myself, as a Caymanian husband, so we have to do it jointly to get the loan. Then I write to the Honourable Minister of Finance, the good Member for West Bay North. *Good Member, can you give me a discount? Can you give me my duty waiver for the first time Caymanian homeowner?* You know what he's going to say to me? Unfortunately, because there are two people who own that and one of them is not Caymanian, I can only give you half of the 7 per cent that you are qualified for. God forbid if you go over \$2 million.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: If you can afford \$2 million.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: If you can afford \$2 million. I don't know why I brought that into the conversation. I should have just left that one out.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay, you win on that one, but let's stick to the point. [Laughter]

I write to the Honourable Minister and he says, *unfortunately, the rules do not allow me to give your partner that 3.75 per cent duty waiver on your* — what does the average house cost now, about \$450,000?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: \$750,000.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Give me a calculator...\$750,000? Tell me how much that is. That's 3.75 per cent; how much money will it cost them?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Plenty of money, because we have decided to fix a problem that's there's another way to fix it.

Minister, this is a genuine request now. In your wrap up — I know you're going to beat me to death when you come back, that's okay, I can take the licks, but can you just answer this part for me? Could we not solve this problem by simply extending the revocable period? Truth be told, people who are in good marriages who know they're in love with each other, they would say, *Listen, make it revocable until 20 years. I am in love with my partner and we're going to be together.*

What's your point of not wanting to give them the status? You have the right on the law to make it revocable for however long you want to. If you are trying to catch those who are in a marriage of convenience, fix the problem in a different way.

Mr. Speaker, as you say, repetition, I have to be careful of that, so I'm going to stop there on that one. I can hear him talking to me in the back of my mind.

I am asking the Government to reconsider that section. As you have seen, I've given an intention to make the amendments to withdraw that component and to leave it as is, at seven years. Mr. Speaker, I want to give you a notice of two amendments.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, as I was alluding to earlier, I want honourable Members to be aware that I intend to move a motion to withdraw that section of amendment, to leave it as is, and if the Government insists on trying to further protect it, I would support the extension of the 10-year mark to 15 or even 20, which you ultimately will still have the controls over if you have suspicions of a marriage of convenience.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to my next point and again, another genuine request to the Minister. Explain to me what documents will be required for the annual declaration. We brought this up in the meeting with the Honourable Minister and his team, and what we were told was you only need to do an affidavit to say that your marriage is intact. I said that's fine. If you are in a good marriage, you have to be able to do that once per year. *That nuh gon' kill you.* Yet, still we have seen no definition of what those requirements are.

Now, a requirement for annual declaration for people who probably are [in a marriage of convenience] is a totally different story. You can ask them for anything you want, they're not Caymanian yet. However, if they are Caymanian, particularly one who is married to a genuine Caymanian, how dare you ask for anything more than just the declaration of that? There needs to be clarity of what an annual declaration needs to be.

This is the problem that we have with the Bill and we asked the Minister to explain these things. *"Oh, it will be in the regulations,"* so I must approve it and don't know what you're going to ask them for? Process is what the problem is, not the Bill. Every one of us in

here wants to strengthen the reform on immigration to protect the country, but you have to do the parliamentary process correctly.

Most of the Members know, Mr. Speaker. I know the experienced ones of this Parliament know that there are some procedural failures on behalf of speediness. I understand that the country is dying to feel something that is in their favour. I get it, but we cannot sacrifice the foundation of the immigration system on speediness. There would be nothing wrong with bringing this Bill at the end of January so we could have ironed out these kinks and delivered a unified front; nothing.

No one is saying that it's a rushed Bill, but it's not our fault that the Government did not provide the Opposition with the amendments until 25 hours before the debate and knowing that we have no access to legal advice at all to examine those amendments. Now I have to be the bad guy to talk about due process, and the average person listening may not even understand... *"What Kenneth shouting about again?"*

However, I know Mr. Speaker, good men like yourself, the Members who have been here for a long, long time like the Honourable former Premier Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, even the good Minister of Finance who put years into this House, understand the parliamentary conventions and why they were established. Scrutiny is a key component to governance, especially when the Government has said that they promised to be transparent and different.

We asked for these things. We get promises on the Floor of the House. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, as far as my memory serves me, when you give a commitment to Parliament on the Floor you're obligated to provide it. We got it at 11:48 a.m. the day before, and we started at 2 p.m., so that was 26 hours and 12 minutes before we debated, before Parliament started.

The Speaker: Member for George Town Central, would you please add that those were done in compliance with the requirements of Standing Orders. I am not aware of any parliamentary procedure that requires regulations to accompany Bills.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're 100 per cent correct on both points in respect of any procedural failures, but if there's an expectation for consultation with the Opposition and the Good Minister said *"we offered the Opposition"*, when the Opposition is one that has been asking them...

Let's not pretend. I didn't want this to be disputed, and it's not disputed for most of the parts of the Bill. To be honest with you, the three parts that have been issues, were minor. Like, can we deal with this part about the Caymanian partner getting status and the revocability? Easy. Can we know about the discretion the Director will have and their ability to revoke, can we know what the guidelines are? Easy stuff. Can we

know exactly what is expected for the declaration? Three things! Three things is all we asked for, so we could have got up here and said the Minister is amazing, the Government is amazing, let's go together. We couldn't get that.

Now, we have these amendments to the amended Bill proposed to us and we don't know what they mean. We can interpret it, but I can promise you that each Member on that side needs legal advice for the sentence structure and what it will deliver in any amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to propose to this honourable House and I hope the Premier is somewhere listening. Deputy Premier, you are in charge while he's out. We need to start providing red line documents to this Parliament. I'm not going to pretend to be a legal drafter or a lawyer. It's not a requirement, but we need to start changing that.

Here's what I have regarding the complexities of things. Here we have the [Immigration] law, we have the amendments to the law, and then we have a set of documents amending the amendments to the law and it's written in legalese. Half of these Members in here, outside of the Attorney General; the good lawyer, former Premier Wayne Panton; the Honourable Premier; and the honourable former Premier from a longevity perspective, most of us learn it by experience over time. Even you, Mr. Speaker.

Over time you start to understand, but drafting is a skill set that needs the support for Members of Parliament to understand what is in it, because that's where the mistakes happen. When it goes to court and the judge says, if they intended X they should have written it by Y. It happens all the time.

My good, honourable former Premier reminded me she's also a lawyer. I forgot that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Oh yes, and my good friend, the Honourable Minister for Environment is also a lawyer. Madam Minister, please forgive me, I forgot.

If we are all honest with ourselves in this House, do you really... I was there with some of you, I remember us asking the Attorney General, *"Read that for me again and how does it..? Okay, explain how that's interpreted this way."* None of us can dispute that because we know, we're there in the Cabinet meetings, but we want the public to do that exercise. We want the public to go find the law, get the amendments, then get the amendments to the amendments and then understand what's going on. That's what we want to do.

Come on, all I'm saying is I want us to all agree to what we're saying. Is that wrong for me to ask that? No one is disputing whether or not we should make these changes, everyone wants the changes, but you know, Kenneth you talk too much sometimes. I know one thing, the Hansards are a record of this honourable

House and politicians will be politicians, so you can sell a story all you like of what you think this Bill is going to do.

Maybe you don't understand what the context of the Bill actually means and what it's going to solve, but I can promise you time will tell. Yes, it strengthens the restrictions to pathways to citizenship; there's much of that in here. It strengthens the ability of the WORC Department to stop frivolous marriages of convenience. I'm so happy about that, and honourable Director, I hope that you cancel every one that you find that you don't like, because there are plenty of them out there. I know plenty of them, but I also know there are many good ones and they shouldn't be negatively affected.

Mr. Speaker, I want to confirm again that my sign with my position on immigration is twofold, and I want the listening audience to remember that immigration is partly the pathway to becoming Caymanian and a permanent resident in this country and the other part is the labour. I'll ask the question, what are we trying to fix, until you can outline that and show the pathway of these changes in collaboration with the other ones that are coming to fix it.

We keep on throwing out these comments. Yes, it's sensitive to say a Caymanian who went away when to school can't come back and get a job. Yes, that is true. Caymanians are being mistreated in the job force. Yes, that is true. There is unemployment of over 1,000 Caymanians. Yes, that is true. There's an under-employment problem. Yes, that is true, but tell me how you going to fix it. Stop repeating the problem. Tell me how this Bill specifically, clause by clause is going to give me the example.

Mr. Speaker, you know one thing I hate? People who get up and read clause for clause. The public does not understand clause for clause. Your job as a leader is to say the current law says X, we are going to change it with clause Y, and the result will be clause Z. That's explanation.

I can guarantee that 95 per cent of our society is just supporting based on trust. I think there's good reason for trust. I can tell you this, I have no doubt in my heart that there isn't any ill intent by the Honourable Minister, but as the old saying goes, it's not what you do but how you do it, because how you do it can be the difference of whether it's effective or not.

I'm asking us to be more diligent, please. The Cayman Islands has to be ever so careful with our competitive edge and if we leave a tone out there that Cayman is not a place that is wanting for others, we can find ourselves in serious trouble. This discussion is going to come back up in the revenue measures.

Not only these immigration changes, because it's not the changes themselves that are so bad, you know? Truth be told, most people who invest here, as long as they're making money, *you think they business about voting? You think they're business about your benefits?* Maybe for those who are lower income; but they want to work and given the opportunity, protect the

thing that is most important, which is the power of the political arm. This is what will happen. The more statuses we give out, which means people who are not originally born of this soil and have cultural norms of this soil, we're going to lose the political power in this Parliament, and then you're going to get legislation that changes things and is not Caymanian. It has already started. I'm not even going to bring up that sensitive topic.

I'll tell you what is going to come next, the new voters will start to say, *"Man, I want to shop on a Sunday."* It's not because of religious reasons why there's no Sunday, because we have Seventh-day Adventists too, but it's the principle of understanding what our forefathers said. You need time to break, you need time to rest your mind and take time out with your family. We are this close, that's the next set of legislators — because politicians go and say whatever the constituents want. I can guarantee that. *"Oh, the voters in my area said they want it open on Sundays."* That's what they do because we are representatives of the masses of voters. That's our job.

If the masses of voters start to be more non-generational Caymanians than [generational] Caymanians, what do you think will happen? Other norms are going to be requested and then you'll see politicians who go, *"I want to please my elected arm and I'm going to bring legislation down here."* Next thing you know, you have a Government fully of people who support non-generational Caymanians from a voting bloc perspective.

That's what we need to protect, not the population. As much as we may think that the population is the biggest problem, as long as you have the power politically and economically, it doesn't matter if we get to 200,000. The truth be told, if our population is growing, with 95 per cent of the businesses here being owned by some Caymanian somewhere, they are winning.

Sometimes I wonder what the plan for population control is. You plan to cut it, or what? Try that. Granted, it was out of control and we are here, but I want to find your economic model of cutting back population control. You talk about finances going down? Everyone has made an investment in the current market that we have.

It may solve some other problems. Maybe we can freeze where we are now and make up for some of those other things, like housing. I would agree with that, and I want to support some of the points that were brought up by the Honourable Minister of Environment, and particularly when it comes to health and social welfare costs, which was brought up by the Honourable Minister Rankine. Stopping the pathway to Caymanian status will address that burden, because we are spending a whole lot of money on NGS 55 and HEA 2, and the more Caymanians we make the more expensive that gets.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to the Members of this House, particularly those on the Government side, I think it's your job to inspire an environment where the working business community — which I'm going to repeat one more time because the sentiment of the business community being the bad guy has to stop, because most businesses in this country are owned by Caymanians. Are some of them bad players? Of course! There are bad players in every part of the world, but if you can offer them an environment where they can succeed at the same time as do their part to the social labour component, they will do so.

Sometimes the reason why they're fighting for cheap labour is because cost of doing business is so expensive. Sometimes I can understand when they go, *"Oh, can I get somebody with a Master's degree and pay them minimum wage?"* You know labour is the second most expensive resource to a business owner? Overhead costs, labour and cost of products are the three main costs for a business owner.

Are we expecting for them to not take advantage of the competitive edge of the world? Within our immigration system right now — this is where the strength comes in for enforcement or the restrictions on if a Caymanian is hired, because we keep on saying *"Oh, we need the best of the best from across the world."* They're not competing within Cayman, they're competing with the rest of the world. If a business owner can have someone who is highly qualified, willing to accept less and willing to squeeze out more hours than they are contracted to do, then that means more money for them. It's a natural behaviour. The power of money and the love of money. Are you planning to stop business communities from loving money? The best way to get them to do the right thing is to incentivise them to do the right thing. I wish they were morally guided to do the right thing, but I can't even depend on that anymore.

I am glad that the Honourable Minister from East End highlighted the fact that this problem cannot be solved by itself and recognised that there are other problems that we need to fix to help solve the bigger picture. Training and preparedness — granted, I dare say that our schools have been producing some amazing sets of students over the last decade and I think the excuses are more driven by profitability rather than quality. Percentages vary, there are still some that really don't want to put in the hard work, but you'll always have that one or two per cent across any society.

I think the best way for this administration to deliver the changes the country expects is to work together with the business community by way of incentive, by way of restrictions and you can tighten the knots right where you need them to be to create a perfect balance where everyone is winning.

Yes, I hear Members talk about, *"Well, immigration reform is global! It's happening everywhere. The United States runnin' 'em, UK runnin' 'em, everybody runnin' 'em."* I'll tell you what, here's the thing

about the Cayman Islands that is different from those jurisdictions, their ratios of nationals compared to the economy and the labour force is totally different. In order for our economy to work, we need them. Don't fool yourself on that. How that balance is struck is important.

I'm going to repeat because I know they're going to give me licks, but I think over time, truth will prevail. Again, I cut immigration into two parts: the pathway to becoming Caymanian, I hope you lock it, close it off. Put a memorandum on it right now, you have my full support. However, the labour component, you can hurt the market and our economy. Very shortly, you're depending on well over \$100 million in revenue more on top of what you get. Do this wrong and see if you make any money.

We want to fix these problems. I hear the sad stories. I almost cried when I heard the honourable Member for Savannah speak, because she's right. She feels it, she sees it. We all see the stories of young people and what they're doing and what they're going through, but let me tell you something, the wrong tune being delivered in our service-based economy can ruin all of it.

The temptation to buy in to the extremism by a few; do not fall for it. You know better. You have to understand how our economy works. You can make the tweaks and do it just as calm as ever and they will follow suit. You don't need to add to it. I know one thing, the current environment out there of 'us versus them' no one on this side created it.

Where did it come from? Why are people saying this Government is creating [laws] like they don't want us around ya or [don't] want businesses? Why is it that every Member had to specify that they're not against expats? Because you know the word is out there. *Unna feelin' it, people call unna, unna hearin' it*, so something you're doing is causing that to spread. Counteract it. Be inspirational. Inspire them to buy into the Cayman dream together. Say, *"Guys, I want you to succeed in your business, particularly the Caymanian ones, but you have to understand your moral obligation too. Come on, let's partner together with the future that is so bright."* Not the tune of *"If unna don't do this, we're gonna shut down your business and if you don't like it, go!"* Wrong tone! That's not what leaders do. That's not what Governments do, and this has nothing to do with the specifics of what's in this Bill.

I wish I had the time to do an illustration almost of every specific impact on real life terms of what this Bill is talking about, because many of the things that you're saying are not going to happen in this Bill, but in the subsequent Bills and regulations.

I just want us to remember what we said in this honourable House because it's going to come back up again when we come back for a review in a year. The Minister is going to be asked, *"Minister, it's been 12 months, how are the numbers looking? Is the marriage of convenience any different? Are Caymanians getting*

more jobs? Are the students coming away from school and into more and more jobs?"

You're going to have to answer to that and I hope that you can answer positively. My feeling, my worry is that you may set yourself up for a trap. I sit down here and set you up for a trap by saying that the way that you think that you're going to fix it, may actually not fix it, it might make it worse.

You have to try something, I'm happy for that. Don't get me wrong. I am very happy because we have to do something, but the part that we're dealing with right now is the rights to become Caymanian, which is important; but the labour part of it, I'm not convinced at this point that this set of changes is what it's going to take to fix that problem of unemployment as well as underemployment and the attitude of togetherness and training in the Cayman Islands. Most Members said this is not the only thing, we have to do others. Yes, you're right; I'm glad they recognise that because it's not one thing by itself. It's not one thing by itself.

The Speaker: Member for George Town Central, in accordance with Standing Order 14(2), the House is suspended for 30 minutes until 5:30 p.m.

Proceedings suspended at 5:04pm.

Proceedings resumed at 6:29pm.

The Speaker: Please be seated. This Parliament is back in order.

Member for George Town Central continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before we took the evening recess, Mr. Speaker, I was getting close to the end of my contribution.

I think I've highlighted the three particular areas of concern that I had and, I must say, most Members are fully aware of my energy and spirit to debate, but I've come to a crossroads again in my political career and I have been deflated by an exercise that transpired throughout the break.

Mr. Speaker, in everything that I've done thus far, I've tried to be informed and I've tried to hold account to what I believe is the right way of doing things. We were given promises of information, information was not delivered, even at the 11th hour and 59 minutes and 59 seconds, still can't get information.

Mr. Speaker, a particular area of concern for Members was clause 10. Clause 10 of this Bill speaks to the requirement of persons granted Caymanian status and prescribed particulars in respect to declaration by members annually.

Mr. Speaker, being granted status in their own application as opposed to being granted status when married to a Caymanian, in my humble opinion, has two different categories of priority and sensitivity. When you become a Caymanian there is a level of authority that

comes with it, privilege and so forth, and I question how far we are willing to go into people's lives, particularly when we get into marriages. Still, at the same time, recognising the necessity for the Department of WORC and its Director to be able to prove marriages of convenience as they're called today.

Since I'm on that point, I think it's time for us to stop calling them marriages of convenience and properly use the term that's used in the United Kingdom, which is "sham marriages", because every marriage has a convenience. That's a simple fact. I think the UK recognising the terminology as sham marriages should be something we amend within this legislation in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that when asking Members of this honourable House to support an amendment to this Bill which will mandate an annual declaration of prescribed particulars, to know what they are going to be. Throughout this journey of discussion and spirit of collaboration we asked what that meant. We were told, particularly for those who are married to a Caymanian it was an annual declaration to suggest that your marriage was still in good standing. Nothing more.

Just to confirm the sensitivities of things, throughout the break, I went to the Honourable Minister as well as the team to get specifics as to what that is. There was never a point where they said they didn't want to give us the draft regulations as to what the particulars would be; they said they had the draft regulations, but they can't give it to me as a Member of Parliament, it would have to be for the Minister to give it to us. Now imagine, I'm in Parliament and the Government wants to put the pressure on me to say "*Vote for this. This is the right thing,*" but I can't get the information that is necessary for me to vote for this particular part because I don't know the particulars that you're going to ask applicants.

It's not like they don't know, Mr. Speaker. Imagine, they look at me and tell me they know what it is but they are not going to give it to us. Talk about transparency. I'm not going to vote for that section based on principle alone. Nobody in the country knows what the particulars are going to be that are going to be asked of these individuals.

You know, that's when you realise that Member of Parliament doesn't really mean anything. Asking for what they are, they won't even lie to you and say, *Boy, we don't got it yet.* They have it, but they won't provide it to this honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister and this Government ask me to support a section in this that speaks about the particulars, when they know what the particulars are but they say they won't give it to us in order for me to understand the delivery of this section and clause? I guess the Parliament doesn't have the right to know. Is the Minister saying that Parliament doesn't have the right to know what it is supporting?

I want to know if every Member on the Government side is fully aware of what those particulars are going to be that they are going to be asking people. Is it going to be what kind of socks you wore on Tuesday? Here's what they say, Mr. Speaker, you're going to be required to the same provisions upon which you were obligated to when you applied in the first place and some of those provisions are as simple as you have to be resident in the Cayman Islands for five years.

I posed a simple question — because again, this one is about people who are married to Caymanians, if you apply for it in your own right, totally different category. Let's just say I'm married, my wife and I. We decided to say, I'm going to move to England for five years. Have I broken the law? Will my wife lose her status? That's what the requirements currently are.

The refusal to give to a Member of Parliament the particulars when they have them and then they say they're being transparent is ludicrous! Minister, can you explain to this House why you have the information agreed upon amongst your team, but you refuse to offer it to Members of Parliament? I asked each Member on the Government side, do you know what the list of the particulars are going to be, mandatory for members to report every year? Do you know? Do you know, Member for West Bay West?

Sorry, Mr. Speaker. It is days like this I feel like I just want to give up, but I know where the truth lies now. I know, because the Minister himself doesn't know. I know where the pressure is coming from, I know where the lack of wanting to give information is coming from now, Mr. Speaker. I'm so disappointed tonight, but I know. Ask your Minister if you don't understand what's happening; ask him. He doesn't want to provide details to this Bill to Members of this House, but has the information. Hiding it, but expecting us to vote on things. Ask him; don't ask me.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Minister has committed to better efficiency as the basis of the approval of this Bill. I will hold him to that because the labour environment is essential to proper operations of our economy. You can't use it as a narrative to support this without committing to do so and I am almost certain that they don't have their ducks in a row to offer that efficiency.

They haven't added any budget to it. They haven't addressed, I think it's called the IMSS [Immigration Support System] that has been dysfunctional for how many years and not updated, and these vast changes will only cause more headaches for WORC. For the business community, I feel sorry for *unna* for the next six months to a year. When the licks start coming, I promise you, Kenneth Bryan is coming with it. Remember *I tell unna that*.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to wrap up my contribution because I'm so deflated by what has transpired throughout the break, so disappointed in what has transpired when ultimately Members are fully aware of what we're trying to get. They talk about, "*Oh,*

we tried to work with the Opposition, tried to give the information so we were all in agreement," even at the eleventh hour, still trying to get information and they refused to give it. I am genuinely concerned, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to read something that I wrote a while back. I went off track. I wrote a nice speech and everything else, I was going to be very complimentary and all that, but I had to go south quickly after much of what I heard throughout the debate.

I'm going to read a section that I wrote about the potential for perceived abuse of power or potential unfairness due to the lack of criteria necessary for the discretion of the Director. Mr. Speaker, the danger of unchecked power — there are clauses in this Bill that grant the Board undefined discretion to the Director of WORC. We recognise that the degree of this discretion is necessary to address the seriousness of abuse of marriages of convenience, now soon to be sham marriages, and we support the intention to strengthen that.

However, Mr. Speaker, without clear statutory criteria and standards guiding that discretion, this legislation, which will be then strengthened by regulation that we have not even seen a draft copy of, creates a dangerous environment ripe for manipulation, bias and even abuse of power. Now, I know some Members have suggested, *how dare we question the integrity of the team* — so they said, I remember it quite clearly. My concern about integrity has gone through the roof tonight after the exercise I just went through, the exercise of trying to falter around the realities of whether they had it or not, and then when I put the pressure on the Minister to say, Minister, they're saying that you have to give the approval to get it, I called the Minister, he came over and then whisper, whisper, "*Oh, we can't give it to you.*" You hear any other nonsense like that in this House?

We need the regulations to understand what this Bill is ultimately going to do and we are being told they got it, but they are not going to share it with us! Do you, Government Members, have any concerns about that process, about something as critical as employment and what employment means to our economy? No shame. Nothing.

[Heavy sigh]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Speaker, as I opened, I said that the Opposition has listened intently to the voice of the people. We accept the calls for greater protection for our Caymanian workers and for smarter economic controls over our labour market. We know that the public anxiety is real. We hear it, we feel it, we see it; and the need for modernisation to secure and improve a fair legislative framework is indisputable.

I want to say Mr. Speaker in my closing, as I speak directly to the thousands of Caymanians who feel frustrated and unheard, we support the Government in respect to those changes, no doubt, but when

we start to throw out process of doing things right, when we start to make political stunts get in the way of proper solutions, I genuinely start to get concerned. Mr. Speaker, as I speak to the many anxious Caymanians, I know that you demand change now and I know it is right for you to seek for a brighter future, but I ask you to do some due diligence to examine how our economy works and don't fall only for sound bites.

They're going to say, *oh, it was us!* As if to say the Opposition did nothing. They will say, *they didn't do it*, but recognise that four Members of their own Government have caused us not to get it to the honourable House in the first place.

We must approach this problem in a very strategic and delicate way to ensure that [in] the rush to fix one problem Mr. Speaker, we do not sacrifice the very core of the economy upon which we rely. We must do this right or we risk our dependence on our economy, which I highlighted many times is service-based and highly relies on outside labour.

Mr. Speaker, the duty of a responsible Opposition, and indeed the core responsibility of any credible Government, is to be intelligent enough to know what the right balance is and how far is too far before creating unforeseen and ultimately more damaging issues for our economy and for the very stability of our labour market.

Mr. Speaker, my job was to try to critically examine and give enough contribution (even though some people will take it out of context) to be able for us all to think about what we're doing, but also to put it in the Hansards. The good thing we know is we still have three years and four months to go, and everything that is being said today, whether it has any damages to the economy, particularly on the labour side — as I said before, if you want to stop giving away statuses tomorrow and put a moratorium on that for the next 10 years, I have no problem; outside of descendants and marriages, I'm quite fine with it. However, the labour market and the controls you have over it, the effect on family life; you will be examined.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I gave notice to amendments that I'll be presenting and I am ultimately, if we have time, with your leeway, with the knowledge of not being presented with the facts of what the particulars are going to be I cannot support that section and therefore I'm going to ask for it to be removed. The decent thing the Minister can do is maybe in his wrap up, give the public and this Parliament, what those particulars are going to be. It's unfair to ask any Member to vote for it without being willing to list it.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the honour to address this Parliament in respect of this Bill before us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?
Minister of Finance.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin, Minister of Finance & Economic Development and Education & Training, Elected Member for West Bay North: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer a short contribution.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I rise to provide a short contribution Mr. Speaker, to this most serious and far reaching first step in immigration reform.

Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the Honourable Minister Michael Myles and his entire team, I don't need to list them out as that has been done a number of times, for the amount of work that has gone into getting us thus far. It would be remiss of me if I didn't also thank those in the previous administration who were agitating and advocating for change in immigration.

It has been said that we as a country did get to the point where a White Paper was issued. I cannot erase or recreate history and I would never ever seek to do that in Parliament. That would be very much unparliamentary and that would not be something that I would ever do and certainly something my parents wouldn't approve of me doing. Let me ensure that the public understands that however you want to slice it or dice it, yes, a White Paper was put forward. I think it was my good friend, the Member for Bodden Town East who was responsible at the time in the Ministry.

That being said, much hard work has now gone in to pick the ball up and get it to this point. As has been alluded to by the Honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Member for George Town Central, the fact is that you have to have your entire Government's support to get to this point. I think that I ought to pause to not only congratulate the Minister but the entire NCFC team, because as we all know in the process, a Minister just can't bring a Bill to Parliament, it takes the entire Government.

The Government has been brave within the first seven months of our administration to take on what is always going to be controversial reform. As the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said in his contribution yesterday, there will be those who say we've gone too far, there will be those who say we have not going far enough.

Having been around Parliament from 2000 and having sat on the first immigration review team (IRT) that created this modern immigration infrastructure, this system of progressive rights that got us out of the dark ages in immigration and got us to a point where we weren't at real legal risk at the time — because how quickly the country forgets the mess that existed in 2000 when I first got elected. In fact, as I look around this Chamber on the elected side, there were only two of us here at that time, myself and the lady Member for Cayman Brac East, and she well knows the mess that existed in immigration. We had 20,000 plus people in

this country who had been here for over five years, we had more than 10,000 people in the country at the time who had been here for over 10 years with no hope in sight because the then Immigration Law just had no systemised way for you to even get on the train to security of tenure. Then, of course, the United Kingdom and the courts were pounding down the doors of the government to do something because it was seen as a real human rights threat and risk for Her Majesty's government.

The current Bill builds upon the very first modern immigration infrastructure that was created in 2004. I'm a bit of a historian and librarian in this Government because as I said, not a single one of them was here. They talk about pressure now? Talk about the pressure of the Governor's Office continually asking the Government, what are you going to do about immigration? The pressures of a case being taken to court and the court ruling against the Government as it related to Caymanian status of a particular individual, which of course jumpstarted the process for us to ensure that we had to get immigration across the finish line because of the real threat and fear that masses of people were going to actually then follow suit and sue the Cayman Islands Government, as they would have been successful. How do I know? Because the court in its ruling had already warned the Government that this would be the way in which it was going to interpret what was deemed an illegal moratorium at the time.

Having given just that little bit of history that gets us to this point, what has been interesting is that in 2004 we created a progressive system of rights and benefits with a rollover policy where everyone who came into this country knew the rules upfront and knew what was at stake. Was the piece of legislation perfect? No, but I tell you what, knowing where you stood, ensuring that the Immigration Law stood as a key gatekeeper to how population growth was going to be controlled and managed in this country was sure better than the subsequent amendments that lead us to today.

I am not going to get in to what has happened in the last decade because that would be terribly unhelpful today. In my humble opinion, many of these changes that we're seeing are simply reverting to the position or near the position of the 2004 law. For those in the public who somehow have confused the fact that the 2004 law got immigration wrong, I would vigorously disagree with that assertion. It did more to get us to a point where we got the system right than the position that exists today. So much so that in the ramp up to the 2025 Election, I, like every other Member who has been elected ran on the basis of immigration change.

However, Mr. Speaker, I didn't just run on the basis of immigration change, on pages 4, 5 and 6 of my manifesto I detailed in a high level summary the proposed changes that I would want to be seen in immigration if elected, so I can say with great confidence that I was elected on a mandate to reform immigration.

I didn't just say we needed immigration reform in a loosey-goosey way, I went into detail about what the current status was and then detailing the key drivers for reform.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to several factors necessitating immigration reform for our country. That is—

“Protection of Caymanians: For far too long work permits and the tick-box points system has eroded any protections for Caymanians and the Cayman Islands from manipulative and irresponsible business and elected leaders. Other countries use their immigration law and policies to protect their citizens and country from intentional and unintentional abuses and the attendant results. Such abuse and neglect must stop immediately.

Economic Growth: The Islands' economic expansion, particularly in tourism and finance, demands skilled labour. Current immigration policies must adapt to ensure that the labour market needs are met without overwhelming or displacing local labour. As local labour is systematically pushed aside, unemployment rates increase. This leads to increased demand for government financial assistance services and the weakening of our families. Simply put the current system is counter to growth as it displaces Caymanians and forces them to depend on government assistance, lose their homes and forego medical care as they cannot access the [labour market].

Social Integration: The diverse expatriate population requires policies that promote integration and respect for Caymanian culture while fostering a multicultural society.”

All of this was in my manifesto.

“Population [Management]: As the population grows, the strain on infrastructure, healthcare and education systems increases. Effective immigration reform can help manage these pressures by controlling the rate and nature of population growth.”

Then, Mr. Speaker, I went in to what I had as my proposed reforms. I won't bore the House with going through every single one of them because I am cognisant of the hour and I did promise that I would be brief. Suffice it to say that there are a number of areas that we are going to have to continue this reform agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this can compare so much to government fee increases. When you don't strategically reform immigration to keep pace with the needs of the labour market and the wishes around population growth of a permanent population, every time you make a change it feels like it's this massive change because we have not kept pace with the times.

I believe wholeheartedly that these changes will serve as a platform for growth in our economy. It will be good for social harmony because it seeks to remedy a large number of very longstanding vexing issues, and so that is why the Member for George Town

Central went to such pains. While he had a number of points, one in particular that he disagrees with, and then I'm not sure what caused the last kerfuffle because I wasn't privileged to the conversation that he had where he said that some information wasn't shared. Other than that, he took great pains to make sure he continued going back to the point that he supports the Bill because he knows that immigration reform is critically important to our country. I believe all of us agree with that. I believe all of us recognise the necessity for us to progress our immigration system, to remedy and fix the very vexing longstanding issues we face.

I will say on reflection, as I sat on that first immigration review team commissioned in 2001 until 2003 that culminated in that first modern Immigration Law, one point that we had was the change in the number of years a person had to wait to get Caymanian status by virtue of marriage. Need I remind the House that it was 15 years? It was the 2004 law that changed it to seven with a three-year wait period before it became "permanent".

I heard the Member for George Town Central in saying, look, why don't you leave it as it is and simply extend the period of time which it becomes automatically revocable and make that be the way in which you "manage and mitigate around the abuses" — the abuses that we know [happen]. We're not getting into any pretend scheme, every single one of us knows that marriage to Caymanians is and has been abused. Now, that's not to say that there aren't good and wholesome marriages, and I agree with the Member completely.

Which way do you go? Do you extend out and have it as drafted in its current form in the Bill or do you go with what the Member has said, let's be a little more... I'm going to use the word lenient, I'm not saying that's what he means, but in terms of acquiring Caymanian status and then having a longer runway if you get divorced, let's say, within the next 8, 10 years or whatever after that, then you would lose it. Right? In my mind, that's the essence of what the Member is saying.

I'm not going to stand here and say that I have some magic insight into the future to say which one of those approaches would be better, but what I can say is — and he is in agreement, and I think that would mean that the entire House is in agreement — is that what exists right now in legislation needs to be changed.

Another point that we all ought to turn our attention to is around the fact of who should enjoy the right to pass on Caymanian status. I personally come from the train of thought that if you are not born with something that you have as a right, you should not be able to pass it on. I do not believe that you should be able to get Caymanian status through grant and then you become a person who can pass it on to another person.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Let me be very clear, in that first immigration review team, through our research we saw numerous instances where within months of a person acquiring Caymanian status through marriage, divorced their then Caymanian spouse, married a non-national and then passed Caymanian status on to that person. It cannot be right. It cannot be logical that we should have a legal infrastructure that allows a person to be granted a right via law that they can then pass on to other people. You should only be able to pass on what you are born with as of right.

That is my personal opinion. That is my position and it has been one of those instances that I have always said, if I had any regret from that first IRT I sat on it was that we didn't address that particular point from back then. It was a missed opportunity, it was a missed point, and certainly it is a point that I think this Parliament ought to now remedy because we cannot continue to have a country that operates with that sort of system, in my humble opinion.

Mr. Speaker, there has been much said and I am not going to get into a back and forth with any Member. I'm in a very generous mood on a Thursday, and so I just want to address a couple of what I think are critically important points for us to ensure that we put out there as a Parliament. I'm going to try my best not to repeat because a number of points have already been made.

Mr. Speaker, Members have talked about the mood that this Government has created, that we have created an 'us and them'. Mr. Speaker, if Members of this House wanted to have an environment in which there was not going to be an 'us and them', in my humble opinion, the White Paper that was published earlier this year should have been titled "The Caymanian Integration Law". The proposal in that White Paper was that the Cayman Immigration Law be renamed the "Cayman Protection Law", so this air of 'us and them' that now gets placed at my doorstep and the doorstep of this Government, is a very unfair and uncharitable one.

The White Paper, Member for George Town Central, which you touted that you were part of getting to a White Paper—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Hold on, you were the one to make the point. It went from the Immigration Law to the Cayman Protection Law. You don't think that that contributed to an 'us and them'? I'm just asking the question, Mr. Speaker, it's a rhetorical question. We all know the answer to the question, come on, but it's a little bit of political gamesmanship. We know how these things go. As I said, Mr. Speaker, a very charitable mood I'm in.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to how we are going to integrate people into our community, whether they wind up here for a short period of time and leave or they wind up here and get Permanent Residence and status, it is critically important to not only population control, but as all Members have said, and I heard the Member for George Town Central pound the point quite vociferously, it is a key economic model that has to be created. The Member is 110 per cent correct, so is the Member for Bodden Town West.

How we go about crafting an immigration policy is on one hand, in large measure, a key economic policy position that we're taking. We as a Government clearly understand that, but it needs to be something that the public understands. This isn't just about who gets Caymanian status, this is also about how we maintain and grow our economy to ensure that all Caymanians benefit, whether they're an employer or an employee, because the reality is the economic activity and the multiplier effect in the economy is what drives our standard of living. There is absolutely no doubt about that.

I believe that this Bill does a whole lot more to improve the lot and prospects of Caymanians than the current position. I believe this Bill is a huge upgrade. There is never going to be a perfect piece of legislation. Certainly, within the next 6, 12 months, once all of this is operationalised, we may very well be back here for an amendment and that ought not to be something that alarms the public. The one thing that I have observed over the years is that governments pass legislation, move on to the next big thing that they want to address and then don't correct expeditiously the cracks that they see. Instead of coming back and saying to the public, look, here is something that's really not working as was planned, we now need to amend it. Plain and simple.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why we as Caymanians who have been elected to this honourable House behave that way. The public expects us to do our best to fix problems. While we may take our first, best stab at an issue, we then need to ensure that we monitor it and where we have to amend, we amend. That is our duty. That is why the public sent us here. The public didn't send us here to then look on and say there's a problem. We're supposed to be the fixers of the problem.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I'll get to that in a minute.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, because I said it during the budget and I'll say it now, I don't know who the Trumpsters were that the Member for George Town Central spoke about, but I can tell the world this: I was born to two Caymanian parents at the George Town Hospital. I can tell the world, on the Anglin side of my family, my great-great-grandfather was the first Anglin to come here, Philip Anglin from Jamaica. The Powery side goes back a little further, the Ebanks side, goes

back way further and the Bush side goes back way further. For me to now hear people get up and be apologetic about being pro-Caymanian? Well... Let me be very, very clear, I, Rolston Malachi Anglin, born on the fifth day of February 1972, am a Caymanian through and through. I will stand and I will defend the public of this country to the best of my ability and with research to the best of my knowledge and I am here to further the interests of the people of the Cayman Islands; point blank.

If there's someone out there who's now going to try to insult my intelligence to say that that statement is divisive, then I will say to them, they are greatly mistaken if they think that I would be mentally weak enough to then be apologetic. I cannot go with any rights to Jamaica, Philippines, India, Canada, America, Ireland, Australia or anywhere else. I'm a Caymanian. The fact is any decent human being who immigrates to another country, who themselves don't recognise that that ought to be the way in which a national of their country behaves, is themselves, clearly, in my opinion, mentally defected or they themselves are simply lying because they would do the same thing in their country.

For us to hear the word "xenophobic", yet in this country with 90,000 people we have over 100 nationalities. In this country more than 50 per cent of the population are non-nationals. Boy, I tell you what, Caymanians are pretty poor at being xenophobic. Caymanians are pretty poor at being xenophobic because to create that sort of environment and to have the social harmony we do, it's an insult when anyone says that. That's the problem. That's been one of our problems for too long. We have been too open, too docile, and so then you get people who want to pound brow, beat you so that you will say, *Oh, well, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, because I say I'm for Caymanians doesn't mean I'm against anybody else.* I don't need to tell anybody who I'm against, what I can say is who I'm for. I am a Caymanian, I'm proud to be a Caymanian.

Let me be clear—

An Hon. Member: Preach it.

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: —in 1990, and I've said this before in many, many forums and in this Parliament the first time I was elected. I was given a scholarship by two Englishmen. The two senior partners at the firm were Englishmen. The staff manager was an Englishman. Back then, the firm was too small to have an HR Manager. Mr. McTaggart would remember those days when the firms were that small. No one at that firm could ever say truthfully that I was not a team player and did not embrace people from every walk of life and every country, but at the same time, I am also going to be a fierce defender of Caymanians and I am going to call a spade a spade. We have to acknowledge that a part of immigration reform is because of the abuses; plain and simple.

There have been many Caymanians who have been systematically excluded from the economy. The system is so opaque that right now, whilst the team at WORC gets to see some of the abuses, it's but the tip of the iceberg as to what's happening to some Caymanians in the economy. We've heard for years about Caymanians who couldn't get articles of clerkship despite getting a 2:1 or above degree. We've stood here and talked and debated about the fact that we need to be getting our Caymanians back home. That shouldn't even be a point that we're talking about.

I accept that the work was started in 2011 or thereabouts when I was Minister of Education when we got a national manpower database to the beta testing stage — what does that mean? We were at the point where we were actually inputting data to see how the database would work and make sure that we could iron out the kinks; yet today the Minister responsible for Caymanian Employment and Immigration and I are still talking about having to create a national database so that we can make the transition of our Caymanians coming home on scholarship or graduating from one of our local universities a seamless one. That is how opaque our labour market is.

We do need to get to the point where, through our immigration reform and policies, every Caymanian child is getting an internship over the summer and if companies don't want to participate, they ought not to have access to work permits.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Government has to take on hundreds, yet we have profitable small and medium-sized companies who absolutely don't participate in anything called internships for Caymanians. I agree with the Member for George Town Central, we do need to incentivise; but I also will tell him, sometimes the best incentive is a sledgehammer too.

I come from the old school. There are times where Government, through legislation, has to do what it has to do because there are people who will choose to do what they want to do, not in the interest of our people. That's where Government must stand in the gap and ensure that we have a system where everyone participates. It can't just be government and a couple of big companies that participate.

Therefore, we are going to work assiduously to get the data, because that has been a legitimate excuse from the business community that they don't have the data. Quite frankly, that's deplorable in 2025. If you look at my manifesto, every company should be mandated to be subscribers of the new national manpower database so that they can search. If you're a small engineering firm, you can search and you can see who's going to be graduating in 2027 with a physical engineering degree and a 3.0 above GPA. They get the information back and they can offer that young person an internship for the summer to make sure it's a good

match for their organisation. They get used to that young person, that young person gets used to them, and in two years' time they can plan their HR arrangements.

I completely get the point with the lack of data, which — let's be very clear, we call a spade, a spade, that's on government. We're the ones spending \$35 million dollars plus per year on scholarships, the least we should be able to do is provide the data as to who is being funded and how they are performing. That's a commitment and that is going to be a key anchor in the way forward with immigration and labour reform.

We have to ensure, Mr. Speaker, that all of our training is aligned. In fact, Members would have heard me saying and I'm happy to report that I am just about to sign off on the creation of a ministerial committee that is going to create the national priority areas of study. It is going to be drawing from the private sector and it is going to be run by the Ministry. We're going to include a couple of the current members of the scholarship secretariat to provide secretarial support and we're going to include two members from the Education Council, because we must be laser focused on the needs of our economy. We must be providing the skills that the labour market needs so that our young people have the best opportunity for success.

Let me give you a real life story. I got an email last week from a young Caymanian lady who is about to graduate from university; she sent me her résumé and she's undertaking a fantastic sounding degree. One of the issues that we face in a modern system of tertiary education is that so many large universities and large countries are offering a much wider diversity of degrees than certainly in my days, and so you can get degrees on organisational change with an emphasis on entrepreneurship. That wasn't something Mr. McTaggart and I would have ever dreamt about when we went to university, but that's a double-edged sword.

Here's the reality of it. Would that young person have been better off with that specific degree or with an accounting degree? We have to be real. We just had a meeting with CIIPA (Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants). Mr. McTaggart, 754 accountants is their current count on the gap that's needed in the economy.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, 754. Do you know how many years it would take to fill that gap?

Here's the reality of the situation. We can all get up in this House and talk about whatever — we can't have all people be this and all people be that — but I can tell everyone in this House, any of you who have had any experience, especially in business and paid attention to the labour market, here's what we need: We need lawyers, we need accountants, we need engineers, we need healthcare professionals, (that is nurses, med techs and doctors), and we need

persons with engineering and technology degrees. We are not New York City, we are not London, we are not a country with millions of people and therefore an economy so wide that you can send your young people off to do a wide variety of degrees for them to be able to fit seamlessly back into the economy. That requires government policy.

To answer the Member for George Town Central when he asked, when is that going to happen? I'm happy to report that the date that's been set is 31st March, 2026 for the report on the national priority areas of study. By 31st May they are giving their recommendations on how we should be reforming the actual scholarship criteria and award system. It has to happen. We cannot continue to just throw money away.

Guess what, we spent this amount without having impact. The impact has to be setting our young people up for success, setting them up to ensure that there is success for them in the labour and employment market. If we are not doing that then we are failing them. We cannot have countless young people come back to Cayman and employers look on and say, that's not exactly what I need for my business. We cannot allow that to continue to happen, because it goes from what sounds like an excuse to then a legitimate reason.

We need to feed the economy. We need to be truthful and open and honest with this country, with our community, with our young people and ensure they understand what the needs are and what will lead to a highly successful career and a highly rewarding career so that they can be on that ladder to become the next Caymanian millionaire.

We shouldn't even be shy about that being something that we are pushing. We shouldn't be shy about that. Why should we be ashamed of that? Look at the size of our financial services industry.

Members in this Chamber know that what I'm about to say is absolutely true. I know for a fact, Mr. McTaggart, Mr. Saunders, the Premier and Mr. Panton know, because all of us worked at what would be big firms. We have dozens and dozens of young professionals landing in this country every year who, within 5 to 10 years of being in Cayman, are millionaires.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yup!

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: That's a fact. That's a fact! Why shouldn't we be, as parliamentarians, telling this country the truth?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I am here to say, because of the size of our community, we cannot produce enough accountants. Look at the highly rewarding career it leads to. Not everyone has to be an auditor. The managing director of Butterfield Bank was a former audit manager from, I think it was Coopers & Lybrand. That's where he wound up. Starting off as an accountant

doesn't mean that you have to stay with an accounting firm, but it provides you the type of skillset that can lead to so many other professions wherever you may want to go.

I'm not saying this because I'm an accountant. I have not been very good at promoting my own profession. I have five children, but three of my daughters are all going to be lawyers, so it's not that I have tried to push. I don't try to push anything on any young person, not even my own. The point that I'm making Mr. Speaker, is we have to align our national priority areas of study with the needs of the economy.

That does not mean that we're not going to allow young Caymanian children to chase their dream, but let's be honest. Let's say a young person is extremely into the sciences and wants to get into quantum physics — there isn't a job in Cayman for you. You're going to have to work at NASA or some type of entity like that. Does that mean that we as a Government say no to that young person? I personally don't believe in that approach, but we have to be very clear, we have to be strategic, we have to be up front, and we need to make sure that what we're doing is about building a pathway to success. Everything we do in education is going to impact the labour market, so we might as well plan it properly and ensure that what we're doing is transparent and that we are up front with it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: My ministry is transparent.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill and the work that is taking place in the Ministry of Caymanian Employment, along with the Ministry of Education and other ministries being hemmed up and ensuring that our early childhood care and education system becomes first class, EIP (Early Intervention Programme) getting additional funding so that we can rescue children at the early stages and set them up for success. No, you won't see the results tomorrow, but you can change the course of a life from those first few years of life.

Having that sort of strategic focus impacts immigration. It impacts it because we provide the skills and human capital that our economy desperately needs. That is how we build a successful Cayman, in my humble opinion.

I used to have an old saying when I was first elected: everything affects everything. Therefore, everything with the Ministry of Culture, the Department of Social Services, the Ministry of Health — with its practitioners who see children at the earliest possible stages and can see someone who has a special or an additional education need — needs to be working in harmony with the Ministry of Education to ensure that a person's life chances are optimised.

That is the work that is important for us. If we do that right, in 10 years' time, these immigration debates will be one of ensuring that we're just tinkering at the edges around who gets to come and who gets to

be here permanently or not, as the Member for George Town Central talked about. That is really where we need to get to. If we take care of the economic and the labour pieces of this puzzle, that is what's going to be the true test of how well these reforms actually work out in the long term.

However, make no mistake, the population side of this is incredibly important as well. Let's not downplay that. Firstly, we have to have a system that withstands international scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, you're going to know what I'm talking about — we had prior governments who put in place moratoriums and other things that courts didn't agree with. We also have a mother country who is going to look at whatever reforms we put in place to ensure that people do have rights under our law, but we can put the gatekeeping provisions in as long as they are reasonable.

I don't believe that there's anything unreasonable in this Bill or certainly in the reform agenda that the good Minister is undertaking. He, like all of us, understands how important it is to move this process forward. This isn't just a political statement; this is something we owe our people, owe our economy, owe to our children, and owe to all stakeholders in this country because immigration cuts across so much of what is the lifeblood of every country.

Mr. Speaker, we've had talk for years about the acquisition of real estate and how many points you got on the point system for it. We clearly understand that that one policy, those 30 points, combined with eliminating the seven year rollover, has greatly contributed to the spike in land prices in this country. Supply and demand, plain and simple. Way more professionals came to Cayman and said, *oh? No, rollover, good, good*. Tick that box. *Can I afford property?* Tick that box. *How many points do I get for acquiring property?* Tick that box. *Now let me go get property*. When demand exceeds supply, prices go up — Economics 101. That has greatly contributed to the uplift in land and property values which has eliminated so many Caymanians from the property ladder.

See, that is where you have to be so careful. That's why I said everything affects everything. That is why we have to be so careful when we are crafting immigration legislation because that, for example, was one of the true unintended consequences. I don't believe there was any parliamentarian who looked on and said, *Oh, well, you know what, this is going to cause Caymanians to be crowded out of the of the property market*. *Let's do it*. Unintended consequence, but as I said earlier, you see a problem, you talk about a problem and we're the legislators but we don't fix the problem. When we see the problems, colleagues, we must fix them. We absolutely must fix them.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as we progress with the immigration reform agenda, the public is going to see that there is going to be a balance that ensures the economic sustainability of the country while balancing

the population needs and the wishes and wants of Caymanians on that side of the equation. It is for that reason that I wholeheartedly give my support to this immigration amendment piece of legislation.

I say to all Members, I heard the Member for George Town Central, I heard it. From what I can gather, there's one provision that he has a particular angst around, and then I don't know about the other thing that went off the rails. He'll have to tell me that on the break, I don't know what happened there. Other than that, he seemed to have been a happy camper all week. I was really disappointed that today he didn't end up as a happy camper; he knows that I like to see him as a happy camper because then he doesn't get up here and speak for an hour and 45 minutes. I say that in jest.

Colleagues, the best thing in immigration reform or any Bill that is of true national importance and that is highly controversial, is to have us joined up at the hip. Let us see what we can do to ensure that we all agree and can all vote 'Aye' with a clean and clear conscience for this Bill. This ought to be a rallying cry of national unity from this Chamber. We ought to be saying to the country, look, politics aside, we saw what was in the best interest of the people of the Cayman Islands, the people who all of us collectively represent, and therefore we all joined in chorus and supported the Bill. Let us take the politics out of it, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member for George Town Central thought that I was going to get up and I was going to, as he said when he was leaving the Chamber, bash him or something like that he said, but as he has seen — today is Thursday.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Thus, we on this side extend a true olive branch, an olive branch of unity, an olive branch that lets us have the passage of an immigration Bill in a dignified manner so that all of our people can see us joining hands, locking arms in national unity to pass.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: He said, "*And transparently*", I hope so. It has to be. That's the only way we can achieve that.

Let us join in arms as a collective body of legislators because this is too important for us to have disunity and arguments over. We need to show this country, show our people, show our Cayman Islands that we can put politics aside and truly put our best foot forward and put their interests first and pass this piece of immigration legislation. Whatever the issues are, let us talk them through, let us come up with a solution that all can rally behind and support because it is too important. Colleagues, it is too important for us to be divided on this most important Bill.

Again, I congratulate the Minister and his team. I thank all who have contributed to getting us to this point, including those in the prior administrations who have gotten us to this point. You know, one thing that I've learned in this thing called representational politics is to be very, very careful once you get off that campaign trail. On the campaign trail it's all open season, we know that, but once you get elected the campaigning must stop and the governing must begin.

I say we're in the governance mode now colleagues, this is about us governing. We are the 19 that have been elected by the good people of our country. Let us be very careful about how much we bash prior administrations and who did this and who didn't do that, because we don't know all the circumstances and how much work went in to try to fix differing issues, so we have to be very careful.

This is my call, on Thursday, 11th December, 2025 at 7:47 p.m. Let us all join together.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: Oh, that was unkind.

[Laughter]

Hon. Rolston M. Anglin: I've been brief! I've been brief, Members. Colleagues, I've been brief.

Let us all join together as we govern these Islands and let us pass this piece of immigration legislation. Let us work together. Let us ensure that the outcome is better than how we found it. Mr. Speaker, with those very brief remarks. I thank you.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, just to get a gauge from Members, my contribution will meet the definition of brief. I haven't heard anything that the Minister in his right of reply can't make short work of. Since I think the Member for East End has a function he's trying to catch so that he can socialise with his people and we have a function in West Bay where we're looking to socialise with our people [before] it's too late and people want to have supper, could we agree to adjourn now?

I'll make a very short contribution — you can time me, 10 minutes — let the Minister do his right of reply and then let's finish this debate tomorrow morning; is that okay? I'm asking whether or not I can move the adjournment now.

The Speaker: Okay.

Suspension of Standing Order 14(1)

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: In order to do that, Mr. Speaker, I move the suspension of Standing Order 14(1) so the business of the House can resume tomorrow at 11am. rather than 2pm.

The Speaker: The question is that Standing Order 14(1) be suspended to allow the House to start its business tomorrow at 11am.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 14(1) suspended.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: You have to move the adjournment first.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I take it my proposal has the support of the House.

[Laughter]

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 11am.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do stand adjourned until 11am. tomorrow, Friday.

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

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

The House therefore is adjourned until 11am. tomorrow.

At 7:50pm the House adjourned until 11am Friday, 12th December, 2025.