



CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

EXPENDITURE REQUESTS TO FINANCE COMMITTEE

FOR THE APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2026 AND 2027) BILL, 2025

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2027

EXPENDITURE REQUESTS TO FINANCE COMMITTEE WITH RESPECT TO THE APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEARS 2026 AND 2027) BILL, 2025

Verbatim transcript of the Standing Finance Committee meeting held Thursday, 13th November, 2025, at 2:36pm in the Chamber of the House of Parliament; George Town, Grand Cayman.

Present: Hon. Rolston M. Anglin, JP - Chairman
Hon. André M. Ebanks, MP
Hon. Gary B. Rutty, MP
Hon. Katherine A. Ebanks-Wilks, MP
Hon. Michael S. Myles, MP
Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, JP, MP
Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, JP, MP
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP
Mrs. Julie J.T. Hunter, JP, MP
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, OCl, Cert. Hon., JP, MP
Hon. Joseph X. Hew, MP
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, JP, MP
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP
Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, MP
Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Cert. Hon., MP
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP
Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP
Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, CCl, JP, MP

In attendance: Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, JP – Financial Secretary & Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
Ms. Anne Owens – Senior Assistant Financial Secretary, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
Mr. Michael Nixon – Senior Assistant Financial Secretary, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
Mr. Matthew Tibbetts – Accountant General, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development

Witnesses: Mr. Durk Banks – Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit (PTU)

Procedural Clerk: Mrs. Zena Merren-Chin – Clerk of the Parliament

[Hon. Rolston M. Anglin, Chairman, presiding]

The Chairman: I would like to call this meeting of Finance Committee to order.

PRAYERS

The Chairman: Let us pray: Eternal and heavenly Father, we thank Thee for this day. We ask you now Lord to bless the deliberations of this Finance Committee now assembled. We ask, oh Lord, that all that will be deliberated, done and said will be pleasing to you, will

be for the benefit of the people of the Cayman Islands. We ask you now Lord to bless all Elected Members here. We ask that you would bless all civil servants and public officers who are here to support the Committee in its work. We ask that you bless the staff of the Parliament. We especially ask that you bless staff from the Ministry of Finance and the ministries that are under scrutiny today. We ask you now, oh Father, to bless each family represented, to bless all of our people, to bless our entire Cayman Islands.

These things we ask in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our saviour.

Amen.

Please be seated.

Good afternoon, honourable members. The House is now in committee, specifically, of course, Finance Committee. The purpose of our meeting is to consider the items shown on the Schedule to the Appropriation (Financial Years 2026 and 2027) Bill, 2025.

We have 19 Elected Members to our Parliament and the quorum of our committee is 10, excluding me as Chairman, of which we are quorate. Honourable members, I request your usual cooperation in your questions that those would be asked promptly and precisely so as to allow the smooth running of our Committee. Also, members, as has been customary from time to time, as I call on each Honourable Minister to be questioned on their output groups I would invite them to make a brief statement to the Committee which would elucidate the items under scrutiny and allow for there to be a more wholesome question and answer period.

I also would like to recognise the fact that a number of motions have been submitted by the Member for Bodden Town West, Mr. Chris Saunders. However, as the proceedings go, we will ensure that all matters are disposed of thoroughly and expeditiously while ensuring that we have proper scrutiny, proper openness and transparency in our process to ensure that the public gets to understand the details of the Appropriation Bill.

We have distributed for members a version of the Appropriation Bill that has the page numbering that tie out to the annual Plan and Estimates to the right of each output group. This is to ensure that members can easily follow along and allow for the process to be as smooth as possible.

The first output groups to be scrutinised today will be those appropriated to the Minister responsible for Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure (PLAHI), the Honourable Jay Ebanks.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town North: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for that explanation as to the proceedings for Finance Committee. We welcome the opportunity to hear from the Honourable Ministers some of the details on their budget.

Mr. Chairman, [it is] certainly not our intention to be obstructive or drag things on, but I'd like to ask that members be able to ask brief questions after the ministers' statements; and I would also seek your indulgence that some members may need to have a bit of a preamble before their questions during question time based on comments made by the Ministers.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that intervention, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and certainly that would be within keeping of good order within Finance Committee. I would just encourage all of us to ensure that as we do that we keep matters tight and concise, but that certainly will be welcomed by the Chair.

With those few brief introductory remarks—

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can I just enquire at what stage I could get a copy of the relevant statements from your Ministers?
Thank you.

The Chairman: The statements would be in the hands of the Honourable Ministers as to whether or not those would be written and prepared or if they will simply speak to their outputs. I'm not certain that everyone actually has something that is prepared, but I'm sure that anyone who has them prepared will be more than willing to share.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By the process of deductive reasoning, if the Minister is reading it, could I perhaps at least have a copy for myself? Thank you.

The Chairman: Absolutely.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Members, with agreement of all we will start. We begin with considering outputs to the Minister responsible for Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure as contained in PAH 1.

Honourable Minister.

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF PLANNING, LANDS, AGRICULTURE, HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks, Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure, Elected Member for North Side: Mr. Chair, thank you for giving me the opportunity.

Mr. Chair, the Ministry of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure touches the life of every Caymanian — where they live, how they move, how their communities grow and how their future is secured.

Since the start of this term, we have completed 48 Cabinet Papers with 45 more on the way, more than three per week. That is not paperwork; that is progress.

Each Cabinet Paper is a commitment — the who, the what, the when, the where and why of the projects that shape our country. Today, I will speak clearly about what those decisions mean: the outcomes, the milestones and the impact on Caymanian families.

Behind this momentum are 1,094 civil servants across this Ministry of Planning, [Lands], Agriculture, Housing, Infrastructure and the SAGCs [Statutory Authorities and Government Companies]. That's planners, surveyors, engineers, mechanics, administrators, inspectors, labourers who turn decisions into action. With over 150 active initiatives, we are shaping the Cayman our children will inherit.

This work is not theory, it is real life in these Islands.

Cayman Islands Airport Authority (CIAA) — Mr. Chair, our airports are the front door of our nation, which is why the air traffic management system upgrade and the runway extension projects are critical — increasing capacity, improving safety and elevating the customer experience from touchdown to take-off.

We are strengthening Caymanian employment across operations, security and customer services so that visitors experience that CaymanKind from the moment they arrive.

The Little Cayman Air and Sea Access Policy is under final review, balancing the connectivity with the environmental protection.

We are modernising the Airports Authority Act as it relates to regulations — consolidating outdated, overlapping rules; clarifying the statutory responsibilities; and aligning the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Overseas Territories Aviation Requirements. The amendments will update the airport boundaries, strengthen the wildlife and environmental protections, and expand the authorised officers' powers across landside and airside operations.

The \$30 million plus Air Traffic Management and Infrastructure Upgrade that is funded through the CIAA operational budgets is well underway through 2026 — installing modern navigation systems, increasing handling capacity and enhancing the safety across all Islands. Most importantly, we are placing Caymanians at the centre of the airport careers through training, advancing and targeted development.

Mr. Chair, I want to also thank the Member for George Town Central, because this was under him before, and the amendments that he made bringing the changes of fees so that we could look forward to doing much of this work. As one of my colleagues always says, *there's always one that sows and one that reaps*.

When a visitor steps into Owen Roberts International or Charles Kirkconnell Airport, they should see Cayman at its best.

Port Authority modernisation — Our ports are the lifeline of our economy. We are modernising the cargo operations, streamlining the cruise process and improving the logistics for the workers and the passengers.

At Royal Watler and the North Terminal we are implementing the shore-based pre-checks for immigration and customs, allowing passengers to clear on land instead of on the ship, speeding up disembarkation and increasing the time spent on Island.

We are expanding our tender capacity and exploring opportunities for broader participation in tender operations to improve efficiency. A new cargo crane (purchased in October and arriving on 1st December) will accelerate the unloading and improve supply chain reliability. This investment strengthens the safety, efficiency and productivity of the port staff. Mr. Chair, again, I thank the Member for George Town Central because he was the one at that point in time who actually adjusted the fees so that we could actually purchase this crane, which is now well on its way to arrive on island by 1st December.

We are modernising the Port Authority Act, resolving the audit findings and aligning the International Maritime conventions and the ILL Code. Our goal is simple: the most efficient, safest and trusted port in the region.

Planning — Mr. Chair, planning is where vision meets responsibility. We are bringing forward the Development and Planning (Amendment) Bill to simplify approvals, strengthen compliance and increase transparency. Our most significant reform is the adoption of the ICC [International Code Council] 2021 building codes. We will not lower our standards. These new ICC codes will be the first branded Cayman Islands codes, where anyone who wants to follow the Cayman Islands codes can do so.

We continue to carefully manage rezoning, ensuring responsible growth that balances development, heritage, and environmental stewardship. The National Development Plan is progressing through structured consultation, giving Caymanians a real voice in shaping their communities. The Planning Appeals Tribunal is operational, providing timely and transparent resolution of matters to ensure public confidence.

Lands and Survey — Mr. Chair, our Lands and Survey team are clearing historic backlogs, improving the title accuracy, digitising mapping systems and modernising land transactions. A new land Bill will streamline compulsory acquisition and compensation, ensuring fairness, clarity and efficiency for families contributing property to national projects.

Mr. Chair, I will elaborate on that a little bit more. The Member for George Town Central and the Member for George Town North have been coming to see me briefly about how we deal with land transactions, and I just make that commitment to them that we are making the amendments to how we look at land transactions in the future so that we can get people paid a lot quicker and at the value at the time when they are going to be paid.

Land purchases under this administration:

- 2.3 acres in West Bay for the new Police Station Emergency Centre;

- 125 acres on the Brac Bluff near the light-house;
- 14 acres in North Side for agriculture and food security; and
- 2.4 acres in Red Bay for transport infrastructure.

Land is not a commodity, it is a heritage, an identity and a national security. This Ministry will continue to protect all lands that we have.

Public Lands Commission — Public access is not a privilege, it is a right. The Public Lands Commission safeguards beaches, parks and open spaces, ensuring Caymanians always have access to the sea that sustained our ancestors. We are modernising the inventories, signage and digital mapping so that no access is ever lost to neglect or confusion. Public land is the people's land and the Ministry will protect it.

Agriculture — Mr. Chair, a nation that relies entirely on imports, stands on borrowed ground. Agriculture is not a pastime, it is a pillar of resilience. We continue to implement the Food and Nutrition Security Policy, strengthening the production, lowering the cost and supporting our farmers.

The key actions include:

- Expanding the farm roads;
- Strengthening biosecurity;
- Establishing the Agro Park and aggregation centre;
- Training farmers through extension services;
- Developing the feed and input strategy; and
- Supporting disaster-resilient production.

Market access is increasing through direct links with hotels, grocers and the schools. Caymanian agriculture is also gaining international visibility with the Cayman Cookout showcasing local eggs, herbs, greens and meat.

The NEST [National Egg Strategy] Programme has forged powerful partnerships with the hospitality [industry], including the supply of 60 dozen eggs weekly to the Ritz Carlton. Mr. Chair, that is one farmer alone that has that contract and we continue to push each one of our farmers [towards] the hospitality [industry]. This is transforming Caymanian farmers, proving our produce can stand proudly on the world stage. Food security is a sovereignty. When we grow our own food, we grow our independence.

Housing: The Caymanian Dream Made Real — Mr. Chair, every Caymanian deserves a safe roof, a strong foundation, [and a piece] of these Islands to call their own.

Later this year, we will table the National Housing Policy and the Ten-Year Strategic Plan — a roadmap for affordable, accessible and sustainable housing.

Key features include:

- Transparent allocation criteria;
- Shared-equity, rent-to-own, and deposit-assistance options;
- Mixed-use and community-oriented developments;
- Energy-efficient, hurricane-resilient construction; and
- Homes that are affordable to buy and affordable to maintain

The Home Programme supports first-time Caymanian buyers. Through the National Housing Development Trust (NHDT), we continue to build new homes, refurbish existing stock, and open serviced lots. NHDT has 1,152 applications under active review. Since 1st May, six families at Flamingo Point have received keys to their new homes. Housing is not just construction — it is legacy, equity, and generational wealth.

To achieve the Strategic Policy Statement's vision for sustainable development and infrastructure, this Ministry requires responsible and adequate funding. Housing gives shelter. Infrastructure gives communities life.

Public Works Department (PWD) - Building for Community — Mr. Chair, the Public Works Department is where vision becomes concrete reality. Major achievements include the Scranton Park and Youth Centre, opening in January; and the Northward Community Centre, with the business case and designs completed and awaiting funding.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: *[Laughter]* I knew that would get you.

PWD also trains the next generation through apprenticeships in carpentry, masonry, engineering, and sustainable construction. There are currently 36 students enrolled.

These projects are more than buildings — they are foundations of belonging.

National Roads Authority (NRA) — Mr. Chair, the NRA's work is seen daily — paving, fixing, widening, and building better roads island wide.

Priority projects include:

- East-West Arterial;
- Linford Pierson Highway;
- Godfrey Nixon Way Extension;
- King's Bypass and Roundabout;
- Spotts Straight;
- Multiple corridor decelerations;
- National Stormwater Management Strategy;
- Agnes Way Connector;
- New lighted crosswalks;
- Integrated Traffic Management System; and
- EVR [Evidence Video Recording] gantries and speed cameras.

These investments save time, money, and lives. To finish these projects, we will need funding. Half-built roads do not move people.

Mr. Chair, in your speech you mentioned that the Government is committed to the East-West Arterial road, and the Premier has made that commitment as well.

Department of Vehicle and Drivers' Licensing (DVDL) — Mr. Chair, DVDL is a central partner in road safety.

Reforms include:

- The Road Code 2025;
- Updated traffic regulations;
- Electronic vehicle registration;
- Strengthened penalties and the demerit-point system; and
- Data-sharing between DVDL, RCIPS, the NRA, and the Courts.

These measures modernise enforcement, streamline services, and protect lives.

Public Transport Unit (PTU) — We are modernising public transport through:

- Expansion of the CI:GO Taxi App;
- The Public Transport Board Policy Framework;
- New enforcement powers;
- A Public Passenger Vehicle Code of Conduct;
- Launch of the Appeals Tribunal;
- A new PTU website;
- A Bus Tracking App;
- School-traffic-management initiatives; and
- The Eastern Districts Shuttle Pilot.

A modern Cayman deserves a professional transport system.

Department of Vehicle and Equipment Services (DVES) — Mr. Chair, DVES is modernising the Government fleet, replacing old vehicles, expanding electric vehicles (EVs), installing charging infrastructure and improving fleet-management systems. Training and certification ensure Caymanians lead this transition.

DVES also supports the planning of the National Bus Depot and Maintenance Facility.

Facilities Management (FM) - The Foundations of Government — FM ensures every government office and public building remains safe and functional. Modernisation includes solar integration, smarter cooling, and cost-saving upgrades. FM's quiet work keeps Government running.

George Town Revitalisation - Restoring the Capital — This project is entering its final phase. Streets are safer and more walkable, public spaces are upgraded, and more than 50 years of underground infrastructure have been replaced in partnership with CUC, the Water Authority, and telecommunications [providers]. George Town is once again becoming a vibrant destination.

Subsea Cable — The Submarine Cable Modernisation Project, coming to Parliament on 10th December, will deliver a new state-of-the-art fibre system, strengthening bandwidth, reliability, and national resilience. This is not optional — it is essential for financial services, healthcare, education, aviation, and national security.

NiCE Programme — Mr. Chair, one that pretty much everyone thought would never come to light — and I see some smiles on the other side as they are probably happy to see that the Government is committed to the National Community Enhancement (NiCE) Programme.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, NiCE provides temporary employment, community pride, and skills development. We are adding training and pathways to full-time opportunities. The winter programme takes place from 1st – 12th December.

This is the empowerment of our people — not charity.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, going off-script, this year, once the NiCE Programme has started, the plan is to share that data with the Minister of Caymanian Employment so that he can try to make sure that we get many of our Caymanian people who are on the NiCE Programme, off of the programme and with a full-time job.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, the NiCE programme is going to be used as a stepping stone to get these individuals to the next stage — a full-time job.

Parks, the Environmental Centre, and Community Centres — Pease Bay Park and Kaibo Public Beach are moving forward.

With regard to the Pease Bay Park, I am told that it should be [having] its final inspection—I wouldn't say we'll have it done by this week, but hopefully we can have it finished by Friday. The Member for Bodden Town East would be happy to know that full power will be there and we can finally open a park that I think will be heavily used in the Bodden Town area. I can see people already using it pretty much every single day. It is a beautiful beach and we look forward to turning the power on and doing the official opening with everyone welcome.

The Youth Centre in Scranton is also one that we are looking forward to having open.

The Northward Community Centre is something that I have been looking forward to commencing the next stage and is just awaiting funding.

These spaces strengthen families, communities, and national pride.

Our Standards - Our Duty to the Future — Under my watch, we will not lower our standards. They protect our people and our reputation. Cayman will always build strong, enforce properly, and plan wisely.

A Nation of Builders — Caymanians at the Heart — The 1,094 staff, the backbone of the Ministry, serve with dedication, pride, and skill. They are Cayman's nation-builders.

Mr. Chair, funding is not expense — it is investment, and every home built anchors a family; every road built connects opportunity; every seed planted strengthens sovereignty; and every project completed builds Cayman's future.

We are not waiting for tomorrow — we are building it today; with vision, with integrity and with heart.

One people. One purpose. One Cayman — building the future together.

Mr. Chair, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity. I brought my speech down from 2 hours to 30 minutes, but I just thought it would be nice to be able to cover just about everything.

Also, Mr. Chair, if you don't mind, quickly, I have made copies for the Opposition, out of transparency, for every line item that I have so that they can have and see everything that's there. I have nothing to hide because it's not my money, it is our money.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister, and thank you for the additional information that you provided to members of the Committee.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER OF PLANNING, LANDS, AGRICULTURE, HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me also echo, after having a quick glance, what we were just handed is very useful.

Mr. Chair, through you sir, to the honourable Member. Would the honourable Member mind expounding a bit on DVES [when] he spoke to the National Bus Depot and Maintenance Facility?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. [There is] some modernisation that we are looking at with updating the bus depots, looking at how we can enhance the bus routes and creating new bus stops. As some of you have seen, there's a new transition happening at the Savannah area where there's going to be another bus depot location. We are going to try to plan where DVES can help facilitate some of the works,

bringing together some of these operations that we are looking at when it comes to PTU and DVDL, bringing them all under one roof, one location instead of having a unit out by itself.

Cabinet recently approved a paper for us to start looking at how we look at all of our authorities, bringing them together and seeing value for money under one roof. When I mentioned that, that's [what I meant], that maybe PTU could be sitting in that area.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Honourable Minister. A plea to the Honourable Minister which I probably will repeat later on: Godfrey Nixon Park in the Washington Boulevard area (otherwise known as Swamp) is heavily used by the community; Rotary has an event there for the community, all of our community meetings are held there. There were plans developed in 2020-2021, and I think they may have even gotten planning permission, for a bathroom block, an area where they can serve food and also to update the playground. I have been begging every budget since then and I'm pleading at this point. Understanding that in the Washington Boulevard/Rock Hole area there's not much public space that isn't already either a parking lot or surrounded by a fence with a padlock on it, I'm pleading with the Government to pay some attention to this area for me.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, the Member for George Town North, Mr. Hew, has brought that to my attention, about upgrading the park with new swings and slides and whatever else that we could put there that the park needed. [Mr. Chair, I can commit to Mr. Hew that I will take on that task to look at that for him.](#)

As Mr. Hew knows, recently he mentioned to me that he needed help with a playground set and things in another location in George Town North and I assisted him with that, so I have no problem with looking at that and getting that completed for you, sir. That will be further down in the budget, coming out of one of the EAs.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition:

Through you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the Honourable Minister; and yes, I'd like to publicly thank him on behalf of the George Town Primary Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for the playground that he provided for the school. It was very much appreciated and well needed.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central and Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town Central: Thank you Mr. Chairman and good afternoon, everyone. Good afternoon to our amazing civil servants, it's great to see you all.

Minister, I want to say thank you so much for such a wonderful, detailed presentation of the vision and plans that you have within the Ministry from a policy perspective on behalf of your administration. I think this is exactly what many of us have been waiting for and naturally I'm quite happy. There's not much here for me to complain about—I don't think there is anything in here. Maybe one little thing, because you know me...

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Oh, thank God.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I want to take this opportunity to highlight and thank the Honourable Minister for not allowing the temptation of politics to get in the way of what he describes, rightfully, [when he said] **“These spaces strengthen families, communities and national pride,”** in his statement when he referred to parks. Sadly for me, the Central Scranton Park was a political football, but he never, even when the Government was formed, made that get in the way of things; [he] committed to the completion of it and it's working well. I want to say that he has been a very strong Minister in supporting with the updates and progress with where things are going and I'm looking forward on behalf of the good people of George Town Central to having it open in January, which I know the whole country will appreciate because it's not only for Central, it's for every Caymanian and those who live in this country.

With that being said, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister publicly today... He knows Central Scranton Park consist of four main areas: the multi-purpose court, the Senior Centre, the Youth Centre and the rest of the property around it that makes up the park itself. There are three persons whom I would like to recommend that those three areas be considered to be named after. I think once I've said the names, persons would understand why.

First, the Senior Centre — I'm asking the Government today to publicly name the Senior Centre after the honourable Lucille Seymour former MP of Parliament, a woman who has contributed most of her life to the support of the seniors in our country. She is still active today on the seniors' council and continues to give support to that. I think it would be honourable, while she continues to do that, to highlight her by naming the Senior Centre after her.

Secondly, the Youth Centre after the honourable former Minister Dr. Frank McField, who was one of the first Members to take the risk in what was perceived to be a difficult neighbourhood and bringing youth activities to the heart of Martin Drive, the heart of Central,

when many other people didn't want to come into our neighbourhood. He tried with a music programme, which worked for the term that he was in and then the administration after that cancelled it. I think his commitment to youth and the social development should not go unnoticed and I would like for the Government to name the Youth Centre after the honourable Dr. Frank McField.

Thirdly, Mr. Chairman, the multi-purpose court. I gave a commitment when I was Minister, expecting to be back in charge of the park — the Lord has different plans, but he's left me with a lifeline of a friend who's now the Minister for the park — and we announced in our opening that we would name the multi-purpose court after Mr. Maxwell Seymour, who many Caymanians know is no longer with us, but is a key component to the sporting programmes in George Town and the greater Cayman Islands for many, many decades. As a symbol of remembrance, I'm asking this administration to support the naming of the multi-purpose court after his memory.

With that being said, Mr. Chairman, I'm not going to take advantage of this time any further. I look forward to getting some clarity by way of questioning through each particular line item, but again, I want to say thank you to the Honourable Minister for his layout of his Ministry's plans. This is what we were all asking for and I look forward to the further proceedings of the questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Honourable Minister, a number of requests have been made.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Yes. Mr. Chair, through you. [I just want to give my pledge back to the Member for George Town Central that I will make sure that the Government looks at naming that Senior Centre after Ms. Lucille Seymour, the Youth Centre after Dr. Frank McField and that multi-purpose court after Mr. Maxwell Seymour.](#)

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Elected Member for Red Bay: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Through you to the Minister. Mr. Minister, I also want to add my congratulations and appreciation for the information provided. I'm very happy to hear that the NiCE Programme is on the agenda.

Could you expand a bit on the adoption of ICC 2021 for building codes? You noted that we won't be lowering our standards, I know that's the case, but a concern is that sometimes when we change building codes it drives up cost. Could you speak to that a little bit, if you could, please?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you, sure. Mr. Chair, the adoption of the new codes is something

that is very needed in the construction industry. It will not drive up the cost of construction, but it will actually enhance, especially in the electrical and the fire side of things; there is a big improvement on that side when it comes to the new codes.

When we went to the International Code Council, maybe two years ago, and we had the talks with them, their recommendation was that we go to the 2021 revision, not the newer version because there are always tweaks and things that they need to iron out of the codes in the newer ones, and the 2021 ICC code was perfectly set out. We actually went out to many of the stakeholders already and they know that this code is actually coming into effect. I have not personally heard back from anyone saying that we should not be doing this or anything like that. Truthfully, there's no contractor who came back to me to say we are going down the wrong path with the new codes.

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay, MP, Roy Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Member for that and I'm sure that, being the type of individual he is, he will have that cost element in his mind as this progresses to make sure that — despite what is being said now — that we don't end up driving up costs. I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much, sir.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East, MP Dwayne "John-John" Seymour.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, Elected Member for Bodden Town East: Thank you, Mr. Chair. You're very kind.

I heard the Minister refer to the Pease Bay Park, to be completed shortly and hopefully to be fully opened this month — God's willing. I think I indicated to the Minister that we wanted the Park named after Mr. Loxley Watler and I've spoken to the family already. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. Yes, indeed, the Member for Bodden Town East has mentioned to me that he would like to see the park named as Mr. Loxley Watler Park. I don't see that the Government would have any problems with that; everything should be okay with that, sir.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East continuing.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: To give some context, Mr. Watler was a resident for many, many years and managed that property for a long, long time.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions on PAH 1?

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you. Mr. Chair. In terms of PAH 1, can the Minister give us a start date for the East-West Arterial?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, Elected Member for Bodden Town West: You have opened on PAH 1 now, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay. As you are aware I filed an amendment to reduce PAH 1 in 2026 and 2027 for \$1 for each year. We have come to some agreement in terms of a format going forward.

Mr. Chairman, something I didn't get a chance to thank you for was your excellent presentation in regard to the Budget. I think it was very professional; it was very technical, and I found it very inspiring. Surprisingly, Mr. Chairman, it was your presentation that actually inspired me to file these amendments for the simple fact that, after hearing such a wonderful story and how you painted such a beautiful picture, I expected your colleagues to do the same and that's the reason I filed it was because I wanted to hear all the wonderful stuff the Minister is also doing so in that way, I'm very happy; I've spoken to the Minister about it and told him I just needed to hear what it is.

Mr. Chairman on a broader note — and this is for all members of Finance Committee and the listening public. It is very important for us in this Parliament that, while we may have political disagreements, we never ever play politics with the finances and the budget of this country. If you go through many of the Caribbean Islands, and I mean whether it be Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad, Saint Lucia, any of them, those islands started taking a different pathway the minute they crossed the political line with regard to the country's finances, and I will encourage all members if they want to really understand how dangerous this is, there was a presentation by Bruce Golding, former Prime Minister of Jamaica, on the 60th anniversary of the Bank of Jamaica that outlined where Jamaica went wrong in terms of their economy.

For the members listening, I just want to remind them that the very Cayman Islands dollar that we have today, that is 80 cents to the US, came from when we used the Jamaican dollar and the Jamaican dollar was

80 cents to the US. In other words, at one point, the Jamaican dollar was stronger than the US dollar and look where it is today; so Bruce Golding's presentation outlined the steps that Jamaica took and the path that they went down, which they have never been able to recover from.

This is why I said in the SPS debate that we may have our political differences, but we need to draw the line on some items and the country's finances cannot be one for political football because we have international rating agencies, we have competitors, we have different people who do it; and we can't afford to ever open that door. I am going to state right now, at the start of this Finance Committee that while I do expect there will be questions, I expect us to at least remain politically neutral to some extent and don't get into that because I'll be holding every Member to task, regardless of whether they sit in Government or Opposition, if I detect that, so I am making that pledge here today.

With that said, Mr. Chairman, I withdraw the Amendment that I made that asks that PAH 1 be reduced by \$1 in 2026 and 2027 in respect of Advice and Support to the Minister of Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing, and Infrastructure and I ask the members in this honourable Finance Committee to support the Motion in terms of withdrawing that \$1 Amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Member, in committee you are able to move or do whatever you please with a Motion that's under your name, meaning no seconder. You are withdrawing it so—

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, I am withdrawing the Motion.

The Chairman: Any further questions on PAH 1?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, I have questions on PAH 1.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: One thing, Mr. Chairman, as I'm going through a PAH 1. I recognise that this Ministry also deals with the properties that the government actually owns. I noticed that under the accounting rules the government has to recognise the lease liability; and I noticed that the total lease liability recognised all the government's leases in excess of \$73 million that have to be amortised over a period of years. That is a very large amount of money that represents pretty much the government's entire lease payment commitments.

From that standpoint, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister: Are there any plans to build another government building because I can tell you right now, \$73 million in lease commitment is a lot of money and that's another building right there; so with that said, that's my first question.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, thank you and I want to thank the Member for that question.

Mr. Chair, he may have heard a few weeks ago that I mentioned on the radio that yes, we recognise that we need a new government building and yes, we are going to be looking at going through the steps that we need for the design phase and going out to do the business case, et cetera for a new Administration Building and a location.

Mr Chair, just going by the time of it but, again, we do have funding in there to be able to start the steps that we need but once the business case is done and where we are at, I can tell you by doing these business cases now that it usually takes on average about two or three years before we will get to that stage, right; but if there's any way we can speed it up, I know it's my team that knows how to speed things up and get things done, so yeah, we are committed to looking at a new administration building.

Hopefully, if I have my way, sir, I would love to bring the capital back to Bodden Town.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman—

An Hon. Member: Smart man.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Well, that's very good news.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister. The government already located large parcels of land in Bodden Town and if you were to do a quick survey — and I guess we can always check with the DG in terms of the amount of public servants who are hired from within the Eastern districts of Bodden Town, East End, and North Side — I think it will probably say it would make great sense to the country to actually move the other building. Now, I know the Minister would very much like to see it in West Bay, but I think from a staffing standpoint, more employees within the public service are within the Eastern districts and I think that would actually make a stronger case, and you already own land in the Eastern districts that can probably take a new government admin building.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Along the lines of my colleague asking about the leasing agreement, I do know that right before we demitted office in government, the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) leased something-Square. I can't remember; it is on the corner of—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: One Technology Square— thank you so much, Minister; but we've yet to see anyone in the building. That's where the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service was supposed to be moving to, and I was quite excited because I think we could use some police presence in that corner; and I'm hoping there are some people in there because it's now November and that lease agreement was signed, I think early part of this year, right? If not, we've spent almost a year's worth of rent on nothing.

Can the Minister inform us or have someone from his team explain to us what happened in respect to it, because it's a lease agreement on the Crown?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, the police are not under [my Ministry], so I'm not able to answer that question. I don't know whether the police have moved in. If there's anyone else who can answer that question directly, but I don't know. Maybe I would say that the Member for George Town Central could save the question for when that line item comes up for the police. Maybe someone can answer him then.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I'm hoping to be very kind to my colleague today and not go into all the other line items. That's why I'm trying to generalise most of my questions on the policy, so I don't have to wait till other lines like particularly, lands, because lands should know whether or not the [entity] who leased it is occupying it.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, though we would have done the lease agreement, I can't guarantee whether the police actually moved in or whether they are doing some fit-out renovation to it or what's happening there or whether they have one person in the One Technology Square building. I really just don't know. That's a question for someone from the Police Department.

The Chairman: Member, if we could wait until we do the appropriations to the Commissioner of Police, through the Premier, for budgetary purposes.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Alright, I will move on to the next question.

I know in his opening statements he spoke about better security and safety on our roads, which I'm very, very happy to hear. Can the Minister say if there's a policy provision change or intent in respect to these electric scooters that seem to be terrorising the roads of this country? Is there anything he can add further than what he said, from a policing perspective? Not policing in the sense of police officers, but maybe in legislation, regulation through DVDL or National Roads Authority... maybe the right word I'm looking for is *enforcement*. Could he give us any indication in respect to policy positions on that?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, can you speak to the electric vehicles and scooters.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I think he's referring to scooters, sir, not vehicles.

Mr. Chair, I can tell you that it is something that we were talking about just recently and that we are looking at making the necessary, whether it's legislation or regulation changes in the near future when it comes to e-bikes being on the road. It's been a concern. I know the police have concerns about them; I hear it pretty much every day from individuals driving, their concerns when it comes to these e-bikes on the road; so in the future, there will be some changes coming regarding them. Whether they have to be licenced and insured or whether there's something else; we'll be able to give more of an update on that in the New Year.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, can the Minister give us a better timeline than the New Year? I apologise, but the New Year is...

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I would say first quarter, sir.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: First quarter. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, through you again. Can I ask the Honourable Minister: In PAH 1, which deals with support and advice to the Minister, but also to his *Ministry*, is the government's policy position that you've allocated enough monies to offer all the hard-working employees that work within the Ministry, the Departments, Authorities, and Government-owned companies that fall under you the necessary COLA (Cost of Living Allowance) that will be needed over the next two years? Is money included in your budget for that?

The Chairman: Can I clarify the question?

Are you asking whether the COLA that was previously approved is in these budgetary statements?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Let me clarify. You are right. Obviously, that would be in there for salaries. I'm asking if the government intends to have other further increases or cost of living adjustments over the next two-year period; and if so, have they budgeted for the money within the relevant budgets?

The Chairman: That's not a question for the Honourable Minister responsible for PLAHI, but it is safe to say that in this particular budget, there are no allocations for any COLA.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: In this particular allocation, or across all the budget?

The Chairman: In this budget 2026 and 2027, this Appropriation Bill, there are no allocations for an additional COLA.

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

The Chairman: Thank you. Member for—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chair, I'm not finished yet.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. You are right to say that the Deputy Governor (DG) is responsible for the employees, but I dare say that we are responsible for the monies that are allocated for the payment so we can ask that question and the Minister should be aware of it; but I'll move on to the authorities and government-owned companies which the DG has nothing to do with.

Does the Minister have any budget allocations there for cost-of-living adjustments for the Port Authority, Cayman Islands Airports Authority, or the National Housing Development Trust, which are government-owned companies?

The Chairman: Just for the sake of clarity: There is no allocation in this Appropriation Bill for a COLA across the entire public sector.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I'll move on from the cost of living question to another area. If you would allow, I'm trying to just deal with all the questions in PLAHI because I was hoping that we could—

The Chairman: Proceed, member. Proceed.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes? Okay.

The Chairman: Just consider that some colleagues are lined up to ask questions as well.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I'll stop after this one and allow other members to ask.

Can the Minister give us a briefing as to the National Housing Development Trust, [which] unfortunately, was in the news recently with some supplies issues — I think it was bathtubs, which created much controversy in other media houses? Can the Minister give any update to ensure that everything is now okay with the National Housing Development Trust and the supply chain for affordable housing?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I feel like we're all over the board here. We're not sticking to PAH 1. There are NHT 4, NHT 5, NHT 6, NHT 7 and NHT 26 [sic] where those questions could be asked and answered. I don't know where we are right now; we're all over. Are we at PAH 1 or... what are we doing?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, it's a good question. I just conferred with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition whether the stated position by the Deputy Leader of questioning the entire Ministry and then taking a block vote was the position. I wasn't sure.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: If you don't want to do it that way, then it's fine.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, we were mindful to take a block vote on this Ministry on these appropriations; we just had a couple of questions that arose from the statement and some that we wanted clarification on before we did that.

The Chairman: Having said that then, Honourable Minister, I think it is appropriate for them to ask the various output groups.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I understand, Mr. Chair. Yes.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

MOTION FOR BLOCK VOTE

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I love Bodden Town, but of all the districts I love Cayman Brac best. Having said that, Mr. Chairman, I was trying to get your attention because I had an opportunity to

peruse the statement, wrap my head around it, and speak with colleagues. Obviously, there's a leader who's in agreement as well.

I've also had an opportunity to look at the explanations and there are one or two deviations whereby there has been an increase, but I know the Minister well; if he hasn't got enough money, he knows quite well that with his very able civil servants how to get more money, and I believe that it would be remiss of me to sit here and pontificate.

As a result, I'd like to put the question on the Honourable Minister's financial allocations. May it please you and others.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for that very useful intervention. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve all the items on the Schedule to the Bill as it relates to the Minister responsible for Planning Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure, namely, PAH 1.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, we had more questions on PAH 1.

The Chairman: Oh.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Good try, though.

The Chairman: It was lucky Thursday; but thank you very much, lady member. I think we'll get back to that point soon.

Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister — and this deals directly with PAH 1, the Ministry and governance. One of the questions is about Port Authority, whereby I noticed in their financial statements that their revenues remain pretty much flat, while the expenses are going up.

In the Port Authority's Financial Statement, one of the numbers that jumped out the most to me is on page 780 of the Ownership Agreement which speaks to other personnel [related] costs; and just for members present and the listening public, in 2024, the actual was \$239,615. Then for 2025, it was forecast to go up to \$871,722 and in 2026, \$942,000 and change, and then in 2027, over a million dollars in other personnel costs. I am curious as to what was the driving force behind that increase.

One: From the Ministry's governance standpoint, are they aware of it, and two, what does it relate to?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, give me one minute, sir.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Members, while we wait, there was a Motion actually put to the Committee, and so we can't continue in good form with a Motion having been put. The lady member for Cayman Brac East actually did put the Motion that we take the output groups to the Minister in block.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Yeah, she actually moved that Motion and so...

[Pause]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, are you or your team in a position to answer the question, or do you need more time?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, if we could give them just a few more minutes.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I'll take the response to that question offline and not hold up the Committee because there's much work to get done. With that said, I have no more questions on PAH 1. I'll deal with it offline during the break or something.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I apologise...

The Chairman: Members...

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: We will keep this simple and in good form. A Motion was put to vote for the output groups to be purchased by the Honourable Minister for Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure in block.

All those in favour of taking them in block, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES and NOES.

The Chairman: The Noes have it.

Agreed: The Motion failed.

The Chairman: We will continue questions to the Honourable Minister responsible for Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, if you would give leeway here.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Eh? That is not... I have to ask for a division now? Geez.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I think we're going against convention here, you know, because if you think about the logic of such a Motion in Finance Committee, the Government will always have the numbers, right? If the Government were to propose a Motion on every single Ministry to vote in block, we would never get any questions in here. That's against convention. Now, if all Members of the Opposition are in support of allowing the Minister to get a block vote, then it is acceptable. It cannot be based on numbers in Finance Committee and we are all aware of that.

Now, granted, I am very, very, willing to allow the Minister to have a large block vote because I don't have many questions on the rest of them and because PAH 1 speaks about policy, you can ask pretty much any question under that line item — pretty much, not all, pretty much; and I think the intent was to ask questions that kind of touch around all the areas in that line item and once those questions were done, happy to take the block vote after that. That's the general rule, so if we open that door, we could be jeopardising the democratic process of this Parliament again. I'll stop there.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your intervention.

Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, Mr. Chairman.

As Mr. Bryan noted, in the past, what we would normally do is exhaust most questions on PAH 1 which is very broad, and after that, we would normally do the remaining items in block vote because many of the questions would already have been answered. Take planning applications, for example. I have questions with regard to management of planning applications, which would be on page 14, but again, from a Ministry standpoint, I can ask that in PAH 1, then I don't have to repeat the question in PAH 14.

The question I have, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister, is with regard to planning notifications. We saw a recent ruling by the Ombudsman in that regard, and what I want to know is [whether] there is policy or any changes now in light of the Ombudsman's ruling in terms of how people are notified within planning applications, within many events in the community. Is the government now looking to make any changes, and if so, what are those changes?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I'm looking back at my speech and one of the things I mentioned therein was about improving the title accuracy, digitising the mapping system and modernising the land transactions.

Mr. Chair, the Member spoke about the Ombudsman's ruling on planning. Mr. Chair, when it comes [to it], it's not just a planning thing. Planning does what they are told to do in law. Whether the developers, whether the contractors, or homeowners, we need to update our land registry and make sure that people are doing their part by updating the system themselves when they're making changes. The old ways of asking for fax machine numbers and PO Box numbers... we need to update that system whereby it is more electronic, and that is something that we're looking at from the Lands and Survey [Department] side as to how we streamline that.

Now when people have to be notified, you know, the accuracy is much better, we can almost account that people are getting their notifications, but for right now, it is saying that notifications are mailed out — they go to P.O. Boxes. Some people change their P.O. Box and don't update the system. When someone goes to Lands and Survey and asks for the 500-ft radius or whatever, how many people are within that radius, they're getting the contact information the government has for those people and they're mailing it out to that P.O. Box number. Some of them are going to come back because nobody's picking them up; [the] mailboxes have changed.

It is something that I, myself, had to do because when I bought my first property I had a different mailing address on that property and I had to go in and update my own property to ensure that I would be notified, so it's not just an aspect of what the Government has to do, but for people themselves. To have them come in and ensure that all of their information is accurate, because if you are not providing accurate information and we are mailing stuff out to you, I mean, who is it to blame then? All right. I mean, so, yes, we have our part that we need to play, but the society has its part that they're going to have to play too, by updating their credentials when it comes to their land and land documents, and how do we deal with that?

The Chairman: The honourable member continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank the Honourable Minister for that response.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister. Something I know the Minister was passionate about was going back to the 10 per cent rule whereby people could add 10 per cent to their home's square footage without going through the long planning process. I think the Minister indicated to me that they had made some progress in that regard. I wonder if he can provide this honourable House and the listening

public with an update with regard to how people can go about adding on to their property without so much red tape.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, that's correct. We did look at that, and there are ways that you can actually do it. We will be putting together a communication package, a kind of basic walk-through so people know exactly what they have to do to add on that 10 percent. There are going to be matters that we still have to look at.

Mr. Chair, one thing we need to ensure that we learn: We recently saw [Hurricane] Melissa; a large hurricane. We want to make sure that whoever is adding on to their home is doing it properly and safely. Safety is number one and we want to make sure that whatever you're connecting to is being connected properly — your roof trusses are done, you got the hurricane straps in the right place. We want to ensure it is safe. I don't want people to think that planning is red tape. Planning is a tool for your safety, to make sure that when you have a hurricane blowing, you can be guaranteed someone came and inspected your place to make sure that your contractor did the right thing— because there are shady contractors out there. There are shady contractors; we've seen them and we know them, and I can tell you there are changes coming down the road for them, too. We're going to hold them accountable.

Mr. Chair, there are processes and steps. My communications team will be rolling out a new step for how you can actually apply for that 10 per cent and how it can work, but there are going to be phases and we're going to try to make it as easy as possible, right, because I know sometimes we throw significant red tape on things. We put too much bureaucracy in front of it and then it just kind of fades away and people say it's not worth it; they don't want to come into the department to do it, whatever, but we are going to try to make sure that it is streamlined, it is as easy as possible, and continue to do it.

You can do it now, but there are steps that you just have to go through because the last thing I want is to know that someone added 10 per cent onto their home and the next hurricane that comes through the roof is gone, and we have dead people in that house because of what? One shoddy contractor that was not inspected and certified by the Planning Department. That's what the Planning Department is there for — to ensure the life and safety of our people and make sure that we're keeping the codes up to date on everything they are doing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I have one more question and I will give others a chance.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister. Something you mentioned in your presentation or opening remarks was the local [building] codes.

Will there be a requirement now in terms of local certification, because something I have a problem with is that many overseas architects are doing work that Caymanian architects should be doing; then we see that buildings can't get approved and passed because the work was done overseas and they completely lost track of everything. I will not mention names, but it's something we spoke about offline. Is there a certification in process for that?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I can tell you we could talk about this one all day long.

The Member for Bodden Town West has spoken to me about this before and I can say it is something my Deputy Chief Officer Tristan [Hydes] and Mr. Haroon Pandohie have started to look at and prepare for how we are able to make this much better going forward and hold these contractors and architects more accountable.

I do agree with you; I do not believe that overseas firms should be getting all the money and doing all these big buildings while our local architects are suffering. Whether they have to come through the local architects, or the local architects are outsourcing that and it's funnelling back through them, that's how I would love to see that done and that's one of the main reasons for updating the code, right? What we're doing now is taking the [building] codes we've always relied on — the Miami Dade codes — but we're taking our regulations and putting them together, streamlining them and creating the first Cayman Islands' [Building] Code.

Now we have a book, and I think it will be electronic going forward. Hopefully, we'll be able to get this AI programme plugged into it, so that you can go in and ask for an update on sections of the code and it will be able to refer it to you. This is something we've been working on for the past 2 to 3 years, and we're almost at the goalpost now. Then we can start to get them plugged into the system. I can tell you once that is done, it is phase one.

The second phase is to actually start holding these contractors accountable; with that, we should be able to come up with stricter rules and regulations and maybe even look at [creating] some kind of appeals' body or something so people can have an avenue to report contractors without going directly to the courts, but it will take more legislative changes to happen. Also, giving the Planning Department more accountability over the type of contractors whereby the Planning Department starts to issue the Trade and Business Licence for contractors where we could actually be able to revoke it or, if we are not going to go down that road, we could be able to issue some kind of caution or certificate down to the trade and business licence [unit]. A report whereby, going forward, they can seize these

contractors and hold them and penalise them for the shady work they're doing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank the Minister for that. I'll take a break now to give others an opportunity.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Whilst we spoke about building a new government building, preferably in the former capital of Bodden Town — what are the plans for the Glass House?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, when it comes to the Glass House, we have so many mixed views on it. Half the people say to tear it down, while half of the people say to renovate it. Some people say to just leave it as it is and some people say they want to see it [become] a National Park while some people say they want to see it as a museum.

Mr. Chair, I think my team has started to have a look at the Glass House. Maybe we [can] actually renovate the bottom floor and turn it into a historic museum area whereby people can walk in and see some of the artefacts, pictures, et cetera of buildings from yesteryear and things like that. It would have to be a cross-Ministry approach where we do all the heavy lifting, all the work, and then I give the car over to my colleague from Social Development, Youth, Sports, and Culture so they could actually start to fit it out for the artefacts they have, so people can start to see the things we have on display, not have them just sitting down in a warehouse or, you know, parked in some corner somewhere.

That's kind of what we are looking for right now for the bottom floor of the Glass House.

The Chairman: The honourable member continuing.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Minister for that answer. I know it is not an easy decision to make. I myself want to see it remain, because as it is now people still refer to the new administration building as "The Glass House".

Mr. Chair, on to PAH 1... trying to encapsulate everything under this... Food and Nutrition Security Policy: I want to ask the Minister if we have come to some agreement. I know the Minister was gung-ho on Central and South America in terms of produce and vegetables. Have we changed the policy on when we can start pursuing this?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

The Food and Nutrition Policy is moving along very well. First off, I want to thank the new Director of the Agriculture Department, Mr. Wilbur Welcome. He

has been very forceful in moving the department forward, especially on the food and nutrition side. We're also looking at places that are already approved to go into the United States, whereby we wouldn't have to pre-approve them again.

In the first part of the year, I think one or two trips are supposed to be made to go back to South America to be able to open back with several of our vendors and the Chamber of Commerce to get them back there to look at stuff and at how we're going to be able to move up; but the logistics is something we've always had to work out very carefully because it's the biggest part of getting anything out of South America. We've sorted some of the logistics out of Honduras, which was actually coming out of Roatán and San Pedro Sula. There was a ship that was coming here; we need to get our vendors to start buying from there.

Some of our vendors want to look at areas of Colombia where we could actually buy more food and not only that, but building materials as well. The Minister from Colombia was here maybe a year ago. He spoke to us about a ship that sails directly into Kingston Harbour from Colombia that we could actually look at offloading in Kingston and then coming to Grand Cayman, so it's more or less getting the logistics right for our people. It is listening to our vendors out there, the supermarkets, those that sell all the hardware and hearing what they think. Where do they think they can go to get the best product for the best value, and then we help them figure out the logistics and consolidating part, because that's another thing.

Consolidation is a big thing, especially from the food-side of things. You know, the one good thing that food vendors always talk about is how if they need 100 of something, they can call the US, order 100 and get it and they can have it here very quickly so, you know, inconsistency was another thing they complained about back when they were using South America. Hopefully we can get those kinks out, so we can get fresher products here because we know many of the products are coming to the Cayman Islands from South America but going into the US for repackaging [before] coming to the Cayman Islands. Sometimes they are probably two weeks on the sea and then God knows how long they are sitting in containers at the wharf.

The Chairman: The honourable member continuing.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you.

Mr. Chair, thank you. Moving on, I thank the Minister for that answer and I think that's going in the right direction. I wanted to ask the Minister a question in terms of the Bodden Town district which actually consists of Savannah-Newlands, Bodden Town West, Bodden Town East; I think it is the largest stretch of frontal land that you actually see from Spotts-Newlands all the way to Frank Sound Junction, and I know the Minister heard me speak about this already, in terms of the upkeep, in terms of a grass cutter.

I don't know what the schedule is now and how many grass cutters we have at NRA, but I've been asking for Bodden Town to have its own centralised team whereby it's done constantly, because I know the Member for Savannah has been on this in terms of beautification, but I think we will get fewer complaints in doing so. Although whenever you cut it brings out the garbage people throw out of their cars — which is sad, but... I'd like to know how many grass cutters we have. I don't know.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I think we are close to having one grass cutter per district right now, and then we also need to have one or maybe two on spare because those grass cutters do have their challenges with the flares getting damaged when they're cutting. When I mention the flares it is actually the rotor blades on them but, Mr. Chairman, that fleet is something that I have been pushing to grow because I do believe that every district needs to have at least two cutters in the area, but not only the cutters. Some of you may have seen that we've recently purchased these little vacuum trucks that actually come behind the cutters so that once the cutter is finished cutting the side of the roads, the vacuum truck is behind it vacuuming up all the debris and picking up all the garbage at the same time.

I want to get the NRA to continue to invest in those trucks also so that we are able to keep one or two of them in every district, you know, because—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Yeah, we'll make sure we get one for the Brac, too. I got to keep my Brac colleague happy; but yes, the roadside clean-up trucks are moving along. I think maybe just two weeks ago they were in the Bodden Town area. If you want, afterwards, I can provide a schedule for you for where those trucks are, the locations they're doing, and what times they're going to be cutting in Bodden Town. Please keep in mind that, as you said, Bodden Town stretches from Bodden Town to Savannah to Frank Sound. It is a massive area, so they could be just about anywhere in that location but yes, we do try to keep one directly in Bodden Town all the time because there are so many side roads that have to be cut.

I'll definitely make the commitment to this House that we are going to look at expanding that fleet and try to get more vacuum trucks. We've tried two different ones. A manual, whereby one guy actually gets out and walks around with a vacuum and just kind of picks up everything, and we bought a smaller one which is like a golf cart almost, with a vacuum on it where the driver doesn't have to get out; he just sits in it and moves the snorkel up and down and it picks up all the debris as you go along. I have found that one

moves much faster and is much easier on the men out there.

I think that may be the trial that we did with both of them and it's working out. I will hear more from Director Edward Howard on which one he thinks has been working out better, but I can guarantee you that I've taken an approach of trying to keep the roads as clean as possible because we've been hearing about garbage all over the roads and that's one of my pet peeves. I keep saying that. Every Monday I come out of Frank Sound I see nothing but litter all over the road. Again, it's something that I'm trying to enhance by putting garbage bins through my area, which I'm going to be looking at purchasing separately myself, but we're going to be expanding the fleet, so the commitment to you is there, sir.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you. I don't have much more but I have a few.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Okay.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'll ask one more and then I'll give my colleague a chance.

In terms of management of the parks that we have, I mean, you have Coe Wood Beach, which is a massive beach; we have the new Pease Bay property, which is a massive beach again — beautiful, you know, aesthetically and otherwise, we have the camping grounds, and we just bought more property there. Then we have Governor Russell Beach.

I'm thinking, you know, we really need these properties managed by someone. I mean, even one person could manage them, but if you can remember just a few months ago we had to repair the roof at the Coe Wood Beach bathrooms. I think we had to change them from sheet rock to wood to ensure that what happened didn't occur again; but you know, building these beautiful properties and we're not putting anyone there to manage them... I don't know if that's on the agenda.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I want to thank the Member for Bodden Town East for the question.

It is something I have been looking at and I can tell you it is a review we're looking at as to how we look after our parks. We are going to be looking at whether we need more park rangers, especially on the PLC (Public Lands Commission) side of it. Adding members, especially to Seven Mile Beach — having people clean the restrooms daily and having the garbage picked up. I just came back from the Puerto Rico FCCA (Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association) Conference and I can tell you that was the number one thing that we got complaints about — about the garbage there, but also how the place is being kept.

We've committed to them that we are going to enhance the Seven Mile Beach Park and put more individuals there to take care of it; but also looking at every single park in each district and how we enhance and take care of them because I do agree, we're building nice, beautiful parks, and we don't have anyone to maintain them. It is a pet peeve of mine too, with my Old Man Bay Park every time I drive past it. I actually get someone to go there and clean it on my own every now and then, too.

Again, we build these parks; we need to make sure they're being maintained. Because the re-organisation of that isn't completed yet and how we're going to be restructuring that, it may take us coming back later in the year for a section 12 to hire more individuals for PLC to build out that team. I know I got the support of the Government but I'm hoping that I have the support of the Opposition to build that out. Again, once the reorganisation is done, that we know how many more individuals we will need as helpers to clean the beach, but also officers who can actually enforce the powers on the beach, then I can tell you I will definitely be back to look for more funding because it is also hindering our tourism product.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the Minister for that. Not just the enforcement powers, but we need persons who are actually affixed to these locations.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Absolutely.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I thank you.

As I said, I have one last one. In terms of restricting or slowing down imports of vehicles into this country whilst we wait for the East-West Arterial. We don't want to know that we've built this beautiful road and [people] just can't wait to get on it and we are jammed again. I think we made some moves in the last couple of years in terms of trying to slow down the types of vehicles that came to the country by increasing the [model] years. I think the last administration that did it was probably the PACT government... Any Caucus decisions on this?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you, what I can say is that yes, the previous government had started to look at road safety standards and how are we going to implement them.

Mr. Chair, I can say confidently here today that once the road safety standards come into play, many of these vehicles that are coming from the Japan domestic market won't be able to come into the Cayman Islands anymore because they will not meet the safety standards we're requiring. Now, when I say what we're requiring, I mean the US and UK safety standards. Any vehicle that can go into the UK or the US will be able to

enter the Cayman Islands. Now, there are vehicles made in Japan that are made to stay in their domestic market, but there are some that are made to be exported into the US market. Those that are able to go into the US market and meet those safety standards will be able to enter the Cayman Islands.

Again, I think it was maybe two years ago that we had what, almost 13, 14 deaths, and all of them were [related] to these imports because they do not meet safety standards. These vehicles are basically just a shell and we need to stop importing them, because everybody who's getting into serious accidents with them, their life is in jeopardy so we have to look at it very seriously. The safety standards are almost finished, almost there, and we should be able to get them in play shortly.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I just want to thank the Minister. I won't ask the other question about housing repairs because Bodden Town has been hit hard, but I'll turn it over to my colleague.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, good colleague.

Mr. Chairman, this is from a lands' perspective. Can the Honourable Minister give us an update on the proceedings for the compulsory acquisition of Red Spot, better known as where the fishermen sell their fish out there on the Waterfront?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, at the moment I cannot give him any information on that because I don't have any information right now; but again, because it is something that is in front of the courts I would probably be better off if any information I have, I give to him directly.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank you, Minister. I just want to confirm that the government has not decided in any capacity to change the intention of acquisition.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, you can guarantee that this is one captain who is not deviating from the course that he's on.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Moving on to my other question. The Minister spoke about the Go Taxi App. I just want to find out if the Minister with this expansion — as a former Minister for Tourism, I found reluctance from the taxi community with the advancements of technology to support them. You know, we get stuck in our ways so to speak, yet I see that you're moving forward with this. I just want to confirm that you've had opportunities in consultation with the Taxi Association because some of them like it the old school way.

I don't want them to get left behind from the opportunities of moving forward, while at the same time we're advancing our tourism product through efficiencies; because most tourists who come here today would rather be able to just go on their phone and book like Uber and I think this is the halfway mark between the two. The question is: Has there been consultation with the Taxi Association on this Go Taxi App?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

I am probably going to take a leaf out of my Deputy Chief Officer Miss Stacie's book. In the meeting we had with the taxi operators, she asked them if they wanted to continue to be Blockbusters or Netflix people. If we continue to be like Blockbusters, we [will] understand where they are today. I think with that, they understand it so much better; and she put it so well and nicely, that after that saying I think she actually convinced everybody at that meeting to get on board. All the taxi [operators] are on board with this App. They're happy.

I think the biggest thing they were wondering and reluctant about was whether [upon] getting into the app, the government was going to be tapping in and taking any funding from them directly and that's not the case. I can say the build-out of the app is well on its way; some taxi operators are using it now just to feel it and see what the kinks are and what improvements need to be done but, again, there's been no pushback about it that I know about. We've had several meetings with them and they seem to be very happy about it.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Mr. Minister. Perfect answer. I couldn't do better myself.

Beautification. You spoke about beautification in your opening remarks. There is a beautification committee; I don't know whether it is continuing. I suspect it is, based on inside information I've been hearing. I just want to know, for one, can you confirm if from a park's perspective your Ministry is a part of that beautification committee?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I won't answer anything regarding the beautification team because that falls under my colleague for tourism directly. When I mentioned beautification, I was talking about keeping up the enhancement of our parks, our roads, so what we do is a section from the PLC and a section from the Roads Authority — maintaining the edges of the road, picking up the garbage, things like that. Going back to the Member for Bodden Town East's question about the cutters and also offering what we call the litter trucks, the vacuum trucks, to allow us to pick up the garbage along the side of the road. That's what I meant when I talked about beautification, not that I was directly involved in beautification.

The Chairman: The honourable member continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, member. I'll pass it on to your colleague when his time arrives.

The Minister also spoke about the recent cruise conference, which I'm happy to hear that both he and the Honourable Minister for Tourism attended. I hope the experience was good, particularly for the new Minister from a tourism perspective.

You also spoke about upgrades to the existing port. From a tourism perspective, can you outline exactly what you are intending to do to improve the cruise tourism experience because I did make improvements by the streamlining of passengers on and off the ship as much as we could within the existing limitations, and I'm excited to hear that you are planning to do more and further that action. Are there any specifics you can give in respect to that? I'm happy to take it offline; I just want to ensure the continued steps to improve the tourism product from a cruise perspective.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I am happy to answer the question for the Member for George Town Central.

Mr. Chair, yes, I did get the opportunity to go to my first FCCA conference, and it was in Puerto Rico. When I got back, I mentioned to my team that I thought it was probably one of the best conferences I've been to in a while. I've learnt so much from going to that conference on how to improve and enhance. Hearing, not only from our side, but from the cruise lines about how we can improve now that they know the people's mandate is that they do not want to build piers, and how we can improve and enhance the safety of our guests while disembarking.

Something we [are] looking at now is that we're going to do all the pre-checks directly onshore whereby, instead of customs and immigration doing that out at the ship and having people sit and wait there,

we will have everyone disembark the ship as quickly as possible and go through the checkpoints onshore. Also opening up not just the Royal Watler, but the North Terminal.

A few weeks ago while we were in Parliament was the test for opening up the North Terminal and it actually worked very well. I took a drive out there to see, and we had people all over George Town. The problem was that we were filtering everyone through the Royal Watler [Terminal]; then everyone filtered to go in the direction they wanted the buses to carry them. Yes, some people do walk around, but once they come out of the North Terminal, they have access to George Town and what George Town has to offer.

Something we would like is to have more improvements out front in George Town, and I won't get too deep into it because, you know, I don't want to steal the Minister for Tourism's thunder on how we want to enhance the George Town Waterfront to be able to get more artefacts, sales, et cetera there. Again, when it comes to the port section, safety, security, and just beautifying that location, that transition, and trying to speed up the process so we can do it quickly.

What it is also going to take, Mr. Chair, is that we are going to have to [ask] companies to invest in more tenders for us now that we are not going in the direction of building the pier because one of the reasons we are limited in the number of ships we have in harbour is that we don't have enough tenders as we need for all the ships to get everyone off.

Therefore, going forward, the mandate is going to be that we're either going to look at making new millionaires in the country, or the people are going to make a bigger investment. I am happy to make new millionaires, but I can tell you what we are not going to do: We're not going to be held back by having only a certain number of tenders in this country. We are going to enhance the tender process as we need to be able to get the people off of the ship and investments will need to be made because if the investment isn't made, the Member for Tourism cannot bring the numbers up. He needs that; and the larger ships are going to take at least five tenders each, so significant investment will need to be made into tender operations. We're looking forward to working that out in the New Year. Once we can get new tenders there, we can get more ships — more ships mean more volume of people and more volume of people leads to more cash for our people.

The other thing I want to look at is the way we sell our product. We are selling our product too cheaply. I've made it known to all the cruise lines, with the Deputy Premier there, that we are going to be looking at the way we sell our product. Now, they are happy about looking at the numbers. They just said, "Please don't drop it on us just like that within the next month or two months. Can you phase it in so that we could [adjust]; we're already pre-booked out over a long period of time over the years" — so yes, we will be looking at that.

However, we want to ensure that it is a fair process when you come down to Royal Watler; no more cutthroats there. No one slashing another man's tyre because he "wants to get around him", or threatening this one and telling him he needs to go home. All of that behaviour *will stop*. I can tell you we will institute a policy that if you're caught misbehaving there, we will review revoking your licence. We have to take a straight stance on these things on how we deal with these people, right?

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: It's going to take a hard approach but, again, it's needed, and we have to get it done.

If we look at the way we do our pre-bookings, and whether the pre-booking is done with the port or with the government, and then we actually do all the vetting of our taxi operators, et cetera, and pass that on so it's a nice, fair, line-up — first come-first served, in/out of the door — that is what we want to give. I do not want the Cayman Islands to look like any other country. We want the Cayman Islands to be the Cayman Islands: unique and what we are, right. That's the way we're going to be looking at enhancing so you'll see a lot of beautification, many changes coming to the port shortly when it comes to the Royal Watler side.

We're also going to look at how we can enhance the Spotts Dock, what improvements can be done there so that in the future if there is a ship that we can actually send around the Spotts Dock on days when there is good weather, so we can push the *Go East* initiative to get more tourists to the eastern side of the island, we are going to push tourists to get to that side of the island too. If we get them out of George Town and a bit further out, they can spend more time on the eastern side of the island and visiting the attractions that the eastern side of the island has to offer. It will not be something that can be offered every single day, but on the days that we *can* offer it, we will be offering the Spotts terminal to a cruise line.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: The member for George Town Central continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I congratulate the Minister for his continued efforts and picking up from where I left off, I think, in respect to moving forward. I think the East-West Arterial is going to be a key component for the *Go East* initiative.

Moving from cruise to cargo, can you say what the government's policy position is for the long-term cargo solution? As you may recall, as Minister for Ports before, we did a significant report that talked about our

growth projections; where we are, and our risks with the limitations of the cargo facility that we have now. As Minister, have you had a chance to assess that and has the government made a decision on what its long-term policy position is for the Cayman Islands' cargo?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

The new board was put together recently. As a matter of fact, if I am correct, I think their first meeting is today. Mr. Chair, after the board meets, we are going to be looking at bringing a paper back to Caucus so that the government can see; but what I can say is that there will have to be a short-term and a long-term measure when it comes to cargo. Some dredging work will have to be done at that single footprint that we're at right now. We know that ships are actually sitting on the bottom and some ships cannot even come in when they're fully loaded. Some of them are stopping halfway, offloading, and as they get lighter and lighter, they keep slipping them down as they come in because of the [shallow] bottom there, so some dredge work needs to be done there in the short term.

There needs to be a long-term solution for the port and again, a presentation will be made to Cabinet. Once that is done, I'm hoping that a presentation can be made to the Parliament and gets full support. I know much of this work was started by you, member Bryan. You know the many problems with the port, and with your vision you actually started the drive to get to the areas, the sections of the port, we need to enhance, so again, there are preliminary works that need to be done.

As you know, the new crane is on its way. That was actually led by you when you were Minister of Ports. Again, it should be here the first week of December and hopefully we will be able to set it up. It will be something very new. It's the first time a crane has been purchased in years and again, it is replacing the old fleet that we have there because I can tell you the guys really, really fight with the old fleet they have.

The modernisation goes on with new trucks for the guys who move the cargo from one facility to the next, because that is another one that's hindering many of our truck drivers. I can tell you, if anyone has ever driven in one of those trucks... I know, when the guys reach out to me and tell me that we need to pave a road, I try to reach out to the NRA to try to pave the road because those trucks are very rugged and every one of the guys who is driving one of those trucks is using a back brace. That's another thing that we have to deal with, so we are looking at new procurement to be able to get new trucks in the future so we can get going.

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

Mr. Chairman, just to give you an indication, I have replacement of property, sidewalks, and the transport unit — three more areas. If you want to split

up, take some questions from another person and come back to me; otherwise, I'll just continue.

The Chairman: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has waited patiently for quite a while through three members' questioning, so I think it's only fair that he be given an opportunity.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Chairman, I think after this, we go back to the traditional line by line item; my apologies for railroading your process, sir. I shall not try it again.

Mr. Chairman, we were on parks earlier, so we're jumping around. Looking at EI 71 and EA 168, Mr. Chairman, on the sheet that the Honourable Minister gave us, EI 71 speaks to the Northward Community Centre and infrastructure planning and community works; and EA 168 speaks to the Northward Community Centre once again, as well as the Pease Bay Park, the Lighthouse Park, the Kaibo Public Beach redesign and the Northward Community Centre.

Other than noticing that these are all east of George Town, I wonder if the Ministry could shed some light on the use of this funding and why the Northward Community Centres is listed under both, because it says the Business Case has been complete.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, the business case for EI 71, which is the Northward Community Park, has been completed. It also talks about some of the community work that needs to be done but, going back to 78 [sic], Mr. Chair, to be truthful, I think this was a typo. Instead of Northward Community Centre for Bodden Town, it was for the Bodden Town Civic Centre.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: You're saying EA 168 or EI 71 is the community centre?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: EI 71...

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Uh-huh?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Reads Northward Community Centre. If you — Mr. Chair, give me one second. Just let me look at my book, and I can tell him what else is there.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, Mr. Chair, while he's doing that, I guess I should have said that EI 71 is \$4.5 million for 2026 and \$5.5 million for 2027; and EA 168 is \$7.5 million for 2026 and \$9 million for 2027, so it's not a small amount of money. Perhaps he could give us some explanation on those.

[Pause]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

EA 168 has the installation of artwork and showcase of Cayman culture for the admin building; it also includes the parks, docks and jetties. Also in 168, “implement a public transportation strategy”. EA 168 also includes purchasing and design of the new office accommodation; and then the road safety initiatives which are the speed cameras. Also, he's right when he says that EA 168 is the multi-purpose Civic Centre Hall. Then we [also] have in EA 168 the Cayman Islands Port Authority, which are some improvements that need to be done, [along] with the AAA audit. Then, in EA 168 we have improvement to building and facilities that are beyond economic repair. That's in 168.

Then EI 71... I'll give him a full breakdown for that—

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister because that's a whole different picture than was drawn for EA 168 which just said Pease Bay Park, Lighthouse Park, Kaibo Public Beach redesign and Northward Community Centre. What he just explained makes absolute sense, and is a completely different picture from what was explained here.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I thank you, Mr. Chair.

Following up on the port and some of the new activities, I wonder if the Minister has any information in terms of us trying to, as he indicated, have the cruise ship tourists stay in port longer to spend more moolah. Are there any intentions of them being able to open their casinos and stay longer? Is that a government policy, or are you not looking in that direction?

The Chairman: Thank you. Thank you very much, member. I think for the record you meant, to spend more “money”.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: My apologies. I do speak several languages.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: I had to give you the opportunity at least once in Finance Committee.

[Laughter]

An honourable member: Oh God.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

Just coming back from the FCCA conference, and having that discussion with the Deputy Premier and the cruise lines, I know that is an option they are asking us if we can look at, especially if we want to be able to see cruises staying later in the Cayman Islands. Again, I don't want to take the Minister of Tourism's thunder, but I know he will cover much of that in his statement, if you are okay with that.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: I'm good with that, Mr. Chair.

I will just ask another question then, Mr. Chair, if you will allow me.

The Chairman: Continuing, Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair, as I alluded to earlier, in terms of housing repairs...

I think in terms of housing repairs, we have quite a number in the Bodden Town area that have not been dealt with for a long time now. Persons from Northward, Bodden Town East, and even other areas of Bodden Town have come to our office, but how is this going to be handled now? Can we somehow get the constituency offices involved?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Sorry; did I speak before you? Okay. Thank you, sir. I apologise for speaking before you.

Mr. Chair, what I can say to the Member is that we are streamlining the way that we deal with home repairs. Instead of the old traditional way of just filling out documentation, we have started to actually make it much easier now. I can send you a website where you can fill out the forms. It's very simple, very easy. You can [access] it in your office and help [people] fill it out very quickly.

What happens now is that we can track pretty much all the repairs much easier; what time they came in, what stage they're at, et cetera, so we're not losing paperwork, not knowing where we're at with it, and have people saying they submitted something two years ago, you know, and haven't heard back from the individuals.

We have PWD staff who are actually being looked at for secondment to help us, who are actually working to help us go out to be able to do the scope of work and opinions. What we did is that we've brought over three individuals from PWD who are helping do the scope and opinions on all the homes. Once the scope and opinions are done, they send them back and then what we do is that we actually have a list of contractors that have been preapproved by both the NHDT and by the previous housing repair committee that have been working really well and they haven't had any faults with them.

What we do is send everything out to them to get the bids on them right away, so instead of us looking at doing just 1, 2, 3 homes, we're going to look at how we are going to be able to ramp up the home repairs. I can tell you that the money that we have for home repairs... we will definitely always have to come back for [additional] home repairs money. It is something for which Supplementaries will always have to be done, and we know that because we could probably put \$10 million in the budget for home repairs and we will fly right through it.

In the future it will be streamlined much better; and I will send you the website as soon as we're finished here so that you can have it, for your office to be able to give it to individuals.

[Pause]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, speaking to my Parliamentary Secretary, who is helping me spearhead that... If you have any individuals who need help right away, especially those who are in dire need when it comes to electricity, safety matters. We look at them very quickly, and try to get them out as quickly as possible. When it comes to the safety side of things the turn-around timeframe for those is very quick.

Where more advanced work needs to be done on the house, there's a longer period. Those will take you know, maybe three to four bids to be able to get them going, but the safety side of things that we can get doing, we try to do them as quickly as possible. Also in the future, we'll see how we can try to utilise some of the resources from PWD to be able to help us get [people] into some of these homes.

Also, I don't know whether some of our PWD staff may need a Deed of Indemnity to be able to go in and work on some of these homes but, again, we'll work out how we can figure that out in the future.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

First, I also want to thank the Minister for that link. He actually sent it to me already and it's already being used by my office manager, so I want to thank him for that. I only have [counting] 1, 2, 3, 4 — six items left; some of them quite brief. I will start with the easiest one first.

In terms of the bush cutting, there is a provision under the law whereby property owners who allow their bush to overgrow on the road from a safety standpoint I think the law already allows for the government when the government goes and cuts it, to invoice those people — to charge them. I would strongly recommend that the government starts [applying] that because I think it

is really unfair to be using the taxpayers' money to maintain people's properties, some of which are actually quite valuable. Some of them are on Beach Bay Road, too. I don't know who owns them, but I would tell you by all means: charge them, because they need to maintain their property. I guess that's not really a question.

Through you, Mr. Chairman to the Honourable Minister — derelict houses. We have a few in my constituency. They are running generators so, clearly, they have no planning approval. These houses are run down and dilapidated and, in some cases, serve as places where people do all kinds of nefarious activities during the day and night, and have also become a breeding ground for rodents and other things.

I would like to know, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, what is the process for getting Planning or anyone involved [in order] to condemn these houses and, in some cases, move some of these individuals out of them. Some of these properties really can't stay. It is causing many issues for people who are trying to maintain surrounding homes, especially with regard to rats, because I've seen some and they are the size of the rats I see on the New York subway.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: What is the process for getting in and getting those derelict houses dealt with?

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, they are not imported rats, right?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, sir; not like the mosquitoes, no. They are not genetically modified.

The Chairman: Okay. Honourable Minister, can you speak to the issue?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I can speak to the housing side. The Minister for the Environment may have to speak to the rats side of things. In that way, it might take a collaborative approach, if you have that many rats running around Bodden Town West.

Mr. Chairman, what I can do is look at what the process is and speak to the Director of Planning, but if you have derelict homes that you think are against the planning regulations and laws, we can have our enforcement team go out and look at those homes; send an enforcement officer there to actually try to get those homes up to date.

Again, I know years ago there were homes knocked down by the NRA, I think, at one point in time, right after [Hurricane] Ivan. Homes that were never fixed, which they had to clean up, especially going through Bodden Town. I know they did a few of them whereby they knocked them down and cleaned up the area. If there are homes like that that we need to look

at, I'm pretty sure there's a policy or something we can probably look at putting together, to be able to help; just go in and clean up the area.

We can get the police involved, especially if it's a safety aspect and there are concerns about activity happening there and the concerned citizens of the neighbourhoods are worried that a particular area could breed crime. I'm pretty sure that's something that we could look at defending. We could probably send an excavator there to clean up the property and maybe look at putting a charge or something onto the property for [the cost]. I will take that on. I've made the note already, and I promise I'll get back to you on that, but if you give me the location of the properties, I will have the Director actually send his enforcement team out there to have a look at them for you, sir.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for that response and through you, Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank the Minister.

I can assure you that I'm not afraid to snitch people out, so I can definitely tell you where these homes are, you don't worry about that.

We talked about the rodents earlier. Something I noticed, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, is reducing the stray animal population and one in particular is cats. When you say reducing the stray animal population — how is the population being reduced?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, something we need to look at doing, and we actually have it in the budget, is building out the cat pound out in [the] agriculture department. I think there's one that we're looking at for Grand Cayman and I have been reliably informed — I'm going to use the words from my good old aunty — that there's one for the Brac also.

Mr. Chair, when we talk about the population, that's from the agriculture side of things on how we would deal with it.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Through you, Mr. Chairman. Is the cat population being reduced now?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I cannot say whether the cat population is being reduced. What I can say is that I can't find my cat Freddie, so...

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I don't know if he's been one of them that's been reduced or not, but—

[Laughter]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I will continue to look for my cat Freddie. Again, it's not a question for me. I can't say whether the cats have been reduced or not, sir.

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

There's a reason I asked. I understand there's a process that may be being used to euthanise some of the cats and from what I've been told, the process may be a bit inhumane. That's what I'm trying to understand — what process is being used to reduce the population.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I can say, if there's anything that Agriculture is doing, we are doing it the proper way and by the book. I don't know, I can't speak for anyone else, but I can speak for Agriculture. You have to go a bit more in depth, or I don't know what to tell you on that. I can only say what Agriculture is doing.

We have not got to the point where we are taking on cats yet; as soon as we have the pound built... Something we did not want to do is to have the cats and dogs together, because we know the dogs would be barking and then the cats would be pretty much up the wall worried about it, so there was a separation that needed to be built for the pound. I just hope my cat Freddie doesn't end up in the pound.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much. Through you, Mr. Chairman, due to the sensitivity of the matter, I will discuss my concerns with the Minister offline.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of planning applications, the number of applications being processed. I remember at one time, Minister, especially at the beginning of the year you were concerned when we were looking at the number of planning applications that were being approved, which set the stage for the level of development that would have come around throughout the course of the year.

Comparing this year with previous years and the forecast for the years to come. I'm curious — how does the number of applications look?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. If you just give me one second, I can give you the accurate numbers.

[Pause]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. If it is okay with the Member, I would be happy if I could provide the breakdown of the numbers by quarter. If that's all right, I can put it in writing for you by tomorrow, sir.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's fine.

To go to what would have been a follow-up: I remember at one point there were concerns with regard to the National Conservation Law and the impact it was having on the country's development. I'm wondering if that trend is continuing and whether it continues to impact basically the jobs in the construction industry.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you. What I can say is that there is a significant number of things that are impacting the economy when it comes to construction, but that is one of them, sir.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much and through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister: Are there any plans to make any necessary changes to legislation to ensure that these things that impact economic activity and jobs for Caymanians would improve?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, just saying that the law actually doesn't fall under me. I would ask the Member if he wouldn't mind asking the Member or the Premier that question directly.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, I will. Moving on to my last two areas, Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister.

In terms of doing something with the Glass House, I remember in the past there were two applications, one from a large contractor, whereby they basically could refurbish it, refit it out, re-strengthen it and pull it back up to purpose. I don't know if that application is still valid, but you probably would know which contractor it was.

Secondly, there was another application by another large contractor to do something with the Cox [Lumber] site, whereby we could have basically built really good, affordable condos for young professional Caymanians. Has there been any consideration on either of those two applications — one for the Glass House and the other for the Cox Lumber site.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I'll speak to the Cox [Lumber] site. I can tell you that the National Housing Trust (NHDT) is working out how we're going to look at triple Ps in the future. I know the Cox site is one that has been very active with a number of developers; I've probably seen five different developers come up with five different renderings of multi-stories that could potentially be built on that site.

Also, as you know, we just passed the changes which would allow us to implement the density change for the other site in George Town which we're going to

be looking at because, as I mentioned previously, we at NHDT can't build ourselves out of the problem we're finding ourselves in. It's going to take the whole industry to help us.

What has happened with the middle class is that there were one or two major contractors that focused on the lower and middle class range and building homes for the people, and what we find now is that those developers have kind of winded down. [They are] not into the business as much as they were before, which has left that void and the NHDT has been trying to fill that void, but they can't fill the void by themselves, so NHDT is going to look at doing triple Ps not only for the Cox [Lumber] site, but for all the other large sites around the island, at how we work together.

Regarding the application for the Glass House. As you mentioned, I do know of the contractor who mentioned that he can look at refurbishing it, but I have not seen any numbers or anything like that from him. It's only been a conversation.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much.

Through you, Mr. Chairman to the Minister. I know there is a large acreage of land available in Northward which could be used for affordable housing. Is that also being considered by the National Housing Trust?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

I actually just sent that for the Lands' team to look at getting us a land valuation price on that particular property. I understand that property may be in foreclosure with the bank, but yes, we are going to be looking at it and maybe putting in an offer towards it. Not only will that property help for building more homes in the Bodden Town — well, I think half East and West; I think it kind of splits both sides — but it will also help with the culvert we need to put in to be able to relieve the water in a certain area of Northward that gets flooded very heavily, so it will actually help us two different ways when it comes to what needs to be done there. From the map that I'm seeing, I think a particular part of that property is actually filled already. I don't know how much, but a large acreage has been filled.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, last question. We have seen countries in the Middle East make serious advances with regard to growing [crops] in containers. I think there is a fancy name they use for it.

Is there any consideration or initiative the government is looking at to encourage that? I know we

have at least one local that I'm aware of who's already doing a very good job in terms of container agriculture. Is there anything else that we are looking at to encourage more, [given] that it would help with our food security?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

I can say it is something we have been looking at for quite some time — container farming, vertical farming, greenhouse spaces, and [others] because we know we're limited with the type of soil that we have; we can only grow certain things and we're a seasonal crop jurisdiction in that everybody is growing peppers at one time or tomatoes at one time.

Now, with pushing container farming, whether it is with grants or concession waivers or whatever, it's something the Ministry and the agriculture department are supportive of. We want to see how we can enhance to go in that direction. As you know, we've also helped out by pushing our National Egg Strategy Programme in the direction it needs to go by helping farmers with the necessary equipment they needed to be able to get them to the safety standards that we needed them to meet; but also the standards that the grocery stores wanted them to meet. Now we have the egg-strategy-farmers going in that direction.

The vertical farming is something that we continue to push. We've started to get the kids, the younger generation, more involved in it. We bought one tower to put into every single [primary] school and the high schools to get kids involved in it and actually make it more of a competition to see what the kids are growing. I can tell you the kids in many of the primary schools are experimenting with just about every single thing when it comes to growing in the towers. They are doing very well, so I can tell you it is something we will continue to push.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.
Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, through you, sir.

In his speech on public transport, the Minister mentioned a few things that, as I reread it, jumped off to me. I wonder if you could put some explanation around these. A very promising one is school traffic management. If he could advise exactly what that is, please?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, can I have him repeat the question, sir?

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Yes, sir. That's fine.

Under public transport, I see a note for school traffic management; if you could explain exactly what that is, please.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Oh, school traffic management.

Mr. Chair through you, when we talk about school traffic management, it pertains to traffic-calming measures within the school zone areas. Many areas have asked us to look at doing pedestrian crossings. We're looking at alternative ways of lighting the pedestrian crossings and making it easier back and forth; slowing traffic down further in the school zones; whether we are actually going to add speed cameras in some of those school zones to enforce the speed [limits] there. When I speak about traffic-calming measures within school zones, that's basically what we are talking about, sir.

I also know in some areas we have to look at expanding sidewalks. Some of them are asking that we move the sidewalks back a bit so there are multiple traffic calming measures that need to be done as a safety aspect for the kids.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I thank the member for that. The speed bumps will be good, but I am really looking forward to the speed cameras.

Eastern districts shuttle pilot; if you can explain what that is, please.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Happy to explain it.

Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in my speech, we are looking at doing a small depot in the Savannah area. At the Hirst Road intersection, between Cayman National Bank (CNB) and the gas station, there have been modifications to that roundabout; that will actually be a small depot.

What we're going to look at doing now is having some of the buses drop people there, turn around and go back and actually helping pilot some of the going East initiatives because one of the biggest complaints we're hearing from the operators of the buses that have to go all the way to Morrit's, Queen's Highway, Rum Point and Kaibo, is that the routes aren't profitable for them because they spend more time going there than there are [passengers].

What we're going to do is run a pilot programme to try to collect data to see how many people are actually taking the buses — similar to what the Progressive's Government did at one point in time when they were collecting data in the George Town area because we know that many of the bus operators would love to turn around at Bodden Town, without a doubt. They don't want to go all the way to East End or down

to Morrit's, so we're trying to figure out what that data looks like, to go forward and see whether, in the future, government has to help subsidise those routes in any way to be able to continue.

The Chairman: The Member continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was hoping you were heading towards the hop-on, hop-off bus, similar to what used to be in George Town. I'm hoping that's something you will look at continuing and maybe bringing into George Town as well.

The other thing that popped out to me was a modern Cayman — a modern Cayman deserves a professional transport system. If you did mention it and it is here, I didn't hear it, didn't see it. Could you advise exactly in what direction we're going in terms of getting in place a modern national transportation system?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Absolutely, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to do that for the member.

Mr. Chair, in improving the efficiency of our bus service, what we want is to have an on-time bus service. We want to modernise our bus service. We heard before that many of the bus [operators] did not want to put GPS trackers and cameras in their buses; Now, [after] talking with them and showing them what the improvements are going to look like, they are happy to do so.

I think one of the main concerns the bus operators have is that some of them may use their bus for different things — [such as] when they go shopping, et cetera — whether the GPS system that is in there will be able to turn off, because it will be part of an APP system whereas you can see these buses in real time; able to see them as they're moving, so you don't have to sit in a bus stop and wait and wonder when a bus is going to be here. You'll be able to download an app on your phone, similar to the taxi app.

We've started with the taxis first, then we're going to work ourselves into a modern bus system. Actually, [most people] have a smartphone; they'll be able to [install] the app on their phone to see and track where the buses are; and be able to send their location so at the same time the bus [operator] knows there's somebody there. Many of the buses are happy with sharing their data at the bus stops and actually putting more bus stops along the routes.

The long-term future of the build-out is maybe having bus depot to depot, and then having some of the smaller buses do the inner routes whereby they would carry passengers indirectly so they would go into Selkirk Drive, Marina Drive, Prospect Drive, into all the side roads, and drop people directly in there but then have the main buses just run from point A to point B. Then those [smaller] buses could come out and drop people at what we would call the bus depot.

Basically, going forward, you could have a smaller bus that would run into Savannah-Newlands picking up people along the roadside there and then dropping them at that one depot at the very top to board the larger bus which would run from point A to point B.

The Chairman: The member for Red Bay continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If the member could advise, it sounds like a fairly large project. Am I correct? A project that's ongoing, that started; if so, what sort of timelines do you envisage for it to come to fruition, so we can have the modern professional transportation system that you referred to.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I can say that everything starts by starting it, and every little piece helps push us further down the road. It is a large build-out of things, and as we've said before, something we're doing to start it is building the App, building the depot, which we're moving to now as well. Then looking at another depot, getting more bus shelters and maybe modernising the bus shelters too; having lighting and actually having the mapping system in them also, whereby you could actually see the live tracking — what's happening, where the buses are, so it is a large build out. It's not something that will just happen next year directly. There are stages of it, that's how it is going to be able to work out, but as to give you a full breakdown of where we would be in the last full stage, I really can't give you that right now, sir.

What I can tell you is that we are working on the bus depot, the locations for the new bus shelters. The Member for George Town Central had mentioned to me the bus shelters for the Palmdale area. We are looking at putting the bus shelters for Palmdale on that side of the road. We have to get permission from the area's homeowners so that we are able to put them there. There are strategic areas that we're going to be working with to be able to put them there, and also look at re-enhancing Eastern Avenue — the bus system at that location, too.

There are multiple parts, tentacles, that we have to build out, but we are committed to completing it and getting it done. It is just taking one bus, one day at a time.

The Chairman: The member for Red Bay continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I want to thank the member for that, sir.

Yeah, I appreciate we won't be able to solve it overnight, but I know the member knows that this national transportation system is a huge part of trying to fix the overall traffic congestion problem that we have. I will leave it there and thank him again, sir.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want the Minister to give me an update as mentioned earlier, on the burnt-out James Manoah Civic Centre — whether it is going to start being repaired in the first quarter; and also the Cumber Avenue project in terms of the flooding and the pond there, whether those works are going to start in the first quarter.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

About the Bodden Town Civic Centre, I can say that we are going through the opinions now to see what the cost is going to be. We do have money allocated in the budget to be able to fix it. That's something we're looking forward to being done. It is probably one of the most heavily-used civic centres, I would say, next to the North Side Civic Centre.

Actually, just this morning DCO Tristan Hydes and I were talking about Cumber Avenue regarding the drainage, et cetera, there, and a particular property we wanted to look at to be able to do the retention pond. Not to speak out of turn, but there are properties coming up for sale in that area that we may be able to look at to make the retention pond we have always talked about needing, to allow for runoff for the storm water management in the Cumber area.

As I said, 8:30 - 9 o'clock this morning we were having that conversation; so, [I am] not just going to Cabinet, but have also been holding all my meetings and also here in Parliament discussing this budget with you all. You know I'm a minister of action, and we will continue to get things done.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Minister, I want to turn our attention to the Public Transportation Unit (PTU). If you have before you the Plan and Estimates (P&E), when you go to the back of your document, it talks about the coercive revenue that the country as a whole will receive. If you can, it's on page 444, and I'm kind of lost because in these revenue projections if you go down about almost halfway on page 44 [sic], it says Public Transport - Drivers Licences and Public Transport - Operator Licences.

Naturally, in 2024 and 2025 you had an amount but in 2026 and 2027 you have nothing, and I said, *okay, well, maybe they're not gonna be issuing any more licences at the public transport unit*; but then we go to your budget statement and under your line item for PTO 2 outputs it still has the same number of estimated application processes. If you have no intention

of collecting any revenue, why are we doing applications? I'm a bit confused. Maybe your team can help me understand.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair through you.

I just want to understand. You're saying if we're not going to issue any bus licences, then we should not be collecting?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Well, I guess the first question is, are you intending to issue any?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

A board is put together and it is up to the board to decide on how they want to deal with the licensee. I can tell you we have just put together a new board, so they're going through the governance and how to operate a board, making sure that standards and everything are kept the way it needs to be done, but I'm happy to update you in the future on the decision the board makes on that.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Minister, and forgive me for coming back at you a bit here, but these documents are the revenue projections for the next two years. Somebody had to make a decision that there would be zero dollars projected to be collected by the Public Transport [Unit] for drivers' licences and operators' licences — and for your technocrats, please, if they want to see what I'm talking about, go to coercive revenue on page 444.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

I just want to reference in PAH 26 in the P&E, at the very bottom of the paper, it says the total cost of supplies to this output in 2026 is \$964,961; however, the revenue of \$14,000 from third parties reduced the cost to Cabinet to \$950,000.

The total cost of supplying the output for 2027 is \$983,000, however, the \$14,000 revenue from third parties reduced the cost to Cabinet of \$969[,000]. I don't know if that—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Ultimately, you get no profit because you're just covering yourself. Is that what I'm understanding?

Mr. Chairman, if the Minister wants, I'm happy to have the Director for the Public Transport Unit support the Minister in answering.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I will have the Director of PTU answer the question, since the Member indicated that he can.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Could you state your name and position for the record?

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Yes. My name is Durk Banks, I'm the Director of Public Transport.

To answer the question, Mr. Chairman, through you: I want to thank the Minister for giving me this opportunity to explain what has happened. Basically, we are in the process of updating the regulations and streamlining the process. We're going to be issuing three-year permits, and the revenue is anticipated to be collected this year; that is why you would not see the revenue collected for 2026 and 2027.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Mr. Director.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the Director. Good to see you, Mr. Durk.

Okay; and that sounds fair. If you plan to collect nothing, as you're collecting everything now for three-year licencing, why are you still collecting monies for the unit for the processing of those applications, if you plan to offer no more and you've collected the money in this year but nothing for the year after that?

If you look in your budget statements, Ministries give you money to do work as a unit, and part of that work in the description it says, "**manages or regulates access to public transportation system through issuance of permits to taxis, tours, public buses, water sports, vehicles, school buses, limousines and prior to operations**" which involve... and it tells you the number of applications. It says "**number of applications processed**" in 2025, you had 900; and you have projected 900 again, for 2026, and 900 in 2027. Therefore, if you are saying that you do not plan to have any revenues for 2027 and 2026 — why are you still collecting money for the processing of it?

I'm confused. Maybe I got it wrong.

The Chairman: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Mr. Chairman, thank you.

I think there are two application processes here. For example, there are applications for registration and deregistration of public passenger vehicles for which there are no fees, but they are recorded as an application that is processed; so the process there [represents] people changing vehicles, selling, buying new vehicles and making applications, but no fee would actually be collected. I hope that clarifies the question.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: All right. I think it does a bit. It would seem strange that the application process amounts will [remain] the same, but I'll take your word in respect to that;

and I'm glad you're here, sir, to address other questions about the PTU.

Let's move on — is the location on the corner of Eastern Avenue and Shedden Road considered to be a depot?

The Chairman: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Mr. Chairman, through you. No; currently, it is only a bus stop.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Durk, what is the role of the Transport Unit?

The Chairman: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Sorry, Mr. Chairman, can you ask the Member to repeat the question, please?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, sir. Happy to do so.

I asked, what is the role of the transport unit? What does it do? For the average person who may not know. I'm trying to find a description for your unit. Ah! Let me assist.

In your plan and estimates, the description of your unit is to monitor "**safety and security standards of all public transportation vehicles, ensuring compliance with the rules and appropriate Acts and carrying out incident investigations along with annual and random inspections. Managing the dispatching of Omni Bus operators from the George Town bus depot.**"

What is the distinguishing factor for a bus depot and a bus stop? What's the difference between the two?

The Chairman: Mr. Banks.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Mr. Chairman, through you.

A bus stop is where buses just stop to pick up passengers; a bus depot is where buses are queued and dispatched based on their time of dispatch, so there is a difference in waiting time at a bus depot. That is the difference, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Director.

Through you, Mr. Chairman: Are you aware of the ongoing problem at the corner of Eastern Avenue and Shedden Road, whereby buses practically use that bus stop as a bus depot, meaning they stay there for significant lengths of time clogging up traffic and [impacting] safety components on the corner; and do you

officers, whose job it is to do investigations as to violations of the rules of their licence, go and check that situation?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I think the last time that we had a Parliament sitting, that question was posed and we answered that we were looking into how we can enhance that area. Again, speaking to the company that's there — I think it's FLOW — about not allowing those buses...

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: It could be, yes; maybe it is the police, but FLOW is there too, for how we handle that location. I have NRA looking at redesigning that intersection and part of it will be how we will be able to ensure that buses are only passing through there to pick up passengers and move off.

We know the challenges. The Member knows the challenges we have with it. He sees it every day. I remember once he was out there arguing in the parking lot about it, so we all are aware of what the challenges are. It's not meaningful for us to be arguing over what has been done in the past. Let us move forward in the future.

I can guarantee you that we are going to fix the problem moving forward, sir, and you can hold me accountable, as the Minister, for ensuring that the intersection gets the treatment it needs, tidying and cleaning it up and making sure about the enforcement side. I will make sure the Chairman knows— as a matter of fact, I will text the Chairman right now— that he has to make sure that enforcement is out there to enforce that those buses move through, sir.

I hope that answers the question you're going down the road with, sir.

The Chairman: The Member for George Town Central continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My colleague and brother: I love you. I asked the question in Parliament a couple of months ago for a reason. You're saying — yes, there are difficulties, I understand because I was the former Minister; but I'm saying you have the authority under the law. You say you want to be held accountable; I will hold you accountable. Here are the facts: The unit can go and take away their licence right now, as we speak.

Since I brought it to your attention, the unit is fully aware of this problem yet chooses not to do anything about it, and they have the authority to do so.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Therefore, to answer the Minister's question, I'm not going to wait for you to fix the problem, when there could potentially be an incident; when somebody dies on the corner of my constituency because the buses are breaking the rules of their licence which the Director and his unit are fully aware and can take action and choose not to do so. I am not going to stand around and not go... Let's work together on this. They can do something now.

Starting tomorrow morning, those buses should not stop there for [any] more than five minutes and move. Every Saturday morning... You're talking about congestion in town? The main reason there's congestion in town is that the bus stop with the most traffic in the whole country is at that location, and it's because of the bus drivers; and the Director and his unit are fully aware of it because we talked about it since I was Minister. They choose to do nothing about it, so Minister, when you say let's work together, I want to work with you, but when you know there are powers there to do something about it, and they choose not to — what do we do in this Parliament?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: I have committed to the Member that I will sort out the problem. As he rightfully said, we've talked about it since he was Minister and we still have the problem. I mentioned that we have just put a new Chairman on the board and I will guarantee you that I will be calling a meeting with the Chairman and making sure that he takes the enforcement side of that area very seriously.

[On] the enhancement side, I am committed to enhancing that location but, again, it will take me some time because there are some gazettes that need to be done. There is critical infrastructure on that particular corner of the road that needs to be done also. Keep in mind also that it is almost the central George Town area; it's been a long time that the infrastructure [there] has not been upgraded, so there are going to be works for which we have to collaborate with the Water Authority, CUC, FLOW — all the networks that are in that location, for how we make the adjustments that we need to make there.

We've already started the work to see how we're going to be able to make the adjustments needed for realigning the section of the road and I guarantee that the enforcement team will be out there holding them responsible. I have asked the Member for George Town Central to hold me, as the Minister, responsible, not my Director. The buck stops with me, sir.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Fair enough.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: So hold me responsible for it.

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

The Chairman: Members, are we almost...?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Unfortunately, I hate to tell you, sir, that I do have a significant number of questions left, but I accept the Minister's response and I thank him. I just want to distinguish that there is a difference between the moderations to the area, which I know will take time — gazettes, et cetera, being done; but that's the infrastructure component. I'm talking about *compliance*.
[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay, so let me move on now, right?

In the topic of transport, can I just ask one last question: Is it illegal for a bus driver, according to their licence (forget the traffic police)... bus drivers who have to avoid other infractions that could cause their licence to be taken away, is it illegal for them to drive on the sidewalk? Is that grounds for them to either be suspended, penalised, or licence taken away — either of those things.

Mr. Durk Banks, Director of Public Transport, Public Transport Unit: Mr. Chairman, through you. To the best of my knowledge, it is an offence for any vehicle to be parked on the sidewalk — private vehicle or public bus. I just want to make one correction.

The Member stated that as the Director, I have the authority to revoke persons' permits. That is incorrect. The permits are issued and revoked by the Public Transport Board, not the Director of the Public Transport Unit. I want that to be minuted, please, for the Member's correction.

The Chairman: Thank you very much. Members, we are exhausting this set of output groups, so can we start to get concise questions and start to get to—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, it's been a while since you've been in Parliament and this is your first budget [since you've been back]; we are going to be here a long time.

Now, if you want to go back to the traditional way, we were trying to do a strategy today, and I'm not trying to be rude or disrespectful in any way, you're the Chair.

The Chairman: Don't be.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I'm not, I'm not.

What I'm saying is that this scrutiny process is essential to democracy. This is a \$2.5 billion budget. If you think that speeding up the process of us asking the relevant questions about the taxpayers' money, then you are the Chair and you have the authority to say so. You can shut me down, but I do believe that every other Member of Parliament in the past would hold you accountable to say that's not due process. This is when the Opposition has the opportunity to scrutinise. The power is in the hands of the government; the opportunity is for the Opposition to scrutinise each question. I think I'm asking relevant questions with respect to it.

Now, if you want to go back to the line item by section by area, I'm happy to do that, but these are the questions I would like to ask in respect to—

The Chairman: Can you give members — because I can see members... because all of us are still human. Can you give us any sort of inclination as to how many more questions you have?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Happy to try to do that, sir.

We have building work permit fees. We got the cruise ship departure tax (which has gone up by 30 per cent). We have the sidewalk heights for NRA, we have the property evaluation concern with respect to compulsory acquisition... I would say at least seven to eight more.

The Chairman: Seven to eight.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, not 78. It could be 78, though, in the whole.

The Chairman: Well, we understand that you could ask 78 more, but the Committee would be well into the wee hours at that point, so let's have your 7 to 8. Then there are the Members for George Town West and Bodden Town, and then we'll take the vote.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No problem, sir. Thank you very much.

Before my thought process derailed, I think you were saying that— and I do accept it Mr. Director, it's not squarely under your authority; hence the reason for the changes in the public transportation law that I think the Minister is talking about. It is for the board to address, but it's for you to bring it to their attention. Correct? Correct. All right. Moving on from that. Thank you so much, Mr. Durk.

Mr. Chairman, again, in respect to the coercive revenue. The former member asked questions about the building permit fees and whether it's an indication of a slowdown in construction. I see again, on page 443

of the Plan and Estimates, that the estimated revenue from building permit fees is decreasing by almost 17 per cent for both years moving forward. Can the Minister give us an indication if there's some reason for that decline, intentional or unintentional?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, this question was asked earlier and I committed to put it in writing for the Member for Bodden Town West at the time. The same one with the buildings. I am committed to also giving a copy to the Member for George Town Central if he's happy with that.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes; Mr. Chairman, through you. I am very comfortable with that. I can get it in writing. I guess maybe what I should have said is this is probably the supporting evidence that your own budget document does project a decline in revenue from building work permit fees, which will give a signal to a decline in construction. What I meant by intentional/unintentional, I definitely know it's not from your angle, so I'll leave that there.

Moving on now, in the same revenue section for which you are now the Minister for the Port Authority, the cruise ship departure charges would fall under your remit. This projection seems to give a positive indication, and maybe you can give the reasons for this positive indication, Minister. On page 443, the revenue projected to be collected for this year is \$6.9 million. Last year it was \$6.4 million and for next year, it's going up to eight point \$8.6 million — a \$2 million increase, and then in 2027 to \$9 million.

I'm assuming the departure charges mean there's going to be a whopping increase in cruise passengers by at least 25 per cent and I would be very happy. If that is what this is indicating, give me the data that suggests so.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. If the Member gives me just one minute, I am just getting the data for the increase.

[Long pause]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

I have been reliably informed that the cruise numbers for 2025 are just over 1.1 million; 2026 are just over 1.3 million, and 2027 are just over 1.7 million; and as far as the projections look right now, there are 1.3 [million] for 2028 which gives us 363 ship calls in 2025, 449 ship calls in 2026, 545 ship calls in 2027 and around 403 ship calls in 2028.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister.

The Member for George Central continuing.

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

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and thank the Minister for that; so it seems like a bump up in the next year and a half to two years, and then it drops down to 1.3 in 2028, which is the last indication I gave to the country but let's see the fruition. Thank you for the explanation and I'm assuming that reflects where the money is coming from.

Can we move to another area of revenue that falls under your Ministry, which has to do — and I hope there's an explanation, because this one I found quite scary, Mr. Chairman. On page 444 of your plan and estimates, for motor vehicle drivers' licences you were making revenue of \$2.3 million in 2024 and \$2.4 million in 2025. When you get to 2026, it increases by 300 per cent to \$10.4 million; and in 2027, to another \$10.4 million in motor vehicle drivers' licences.

Can you explain what has caused the 300 per cent increase? Are you increasing the drivers' licence fees or what — what is causing that large increase in revenue?

The Chairman: Members, the Minister needs a small break so we will break for five minutes.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Committee suspended at 6:03pm

Committee resumed at 6:14pm

The Chairman: I call this meeting of Finance Committee back to order. Please be seated.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: The Minister explaining the new drivers' licence fee structure.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, in the new budget we are proposing to increase drivers' licences, vehicle licences and licences for trailers depending also on the category of the group that you are in and the years will be increased also by the amounts; but I want to make it very clear, Mr. Chair: the increase is not for Caymanians. The increase is not for Caymanians.

If the Member is happy, I can give him a full breakdown of every increase that there will be when it comes to DVDL. I can have it for him probably by tomorrow and keep in mind this is actually something that we're proposing to go forward with. If you're okay with that, Member for George Town Central, I'll be able to provide you with a full detailed breakdown of all increases, but I just want to make sure that it is absolutely clear that these increases will not hit Caymanians.

The Chairman: The Member for George Central continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is very pleasant news, to know that it's not for Caymanians and I'm assuming that's a policy decision, because it's in your budget projection, so I'm assuming that will be going forward.

Mr. Chairman, I want to move now to an area which I think my colleague, the Member for Bodden Town East, touched on earlier, but I want to go in the opposite direction; it has to do with the parks' clean-up. We have unfortunately just seen Hurricane Melissa's destruction upon our brothers and sisters in Jamaica, and my heart and prayers go out to them and those who are within the sound of my voice. May God continue to bless Jamaica in their recovery, but it highlighted [something for me] as a member and I know that all members here probably have seen this.

You have Caymanians in their homes who are not in a financial position to address the risk of large trees that are very dangerous to persons' homes that we know if a hurricane was to come and the person was actually in the home, they could possibly get severe damage to property and even potential death. I was hoping that the Government would consider an option of assisting persons who meet a particular threshold of need by assessing the risk and if they are not in a financial position to do so, willing to offer the appropriate tree cutting services. I have many vulnerable seniors who have amazing big trees around their property and every year I get a call asking, "*Minister or Member, can you come and help cut it?*"

Obviously, we recognise that tree-cutting services are an expensive exercise. One tree can cost up to \$3,000 to cut down. I think for those who are vulnerable, particularly our elderly, we should consider some sort of programme whereby people can apply and prove that they can't do it themselves, because what will end up happening if a severe hurricane comes is that we're going to have to end up helping them in the long run, so—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, maybe expanding the NiCE programme.

I don't think that was a question. I'll phrase it this way: is there such an option in the park clean-up programme that you have; if not, would it be something the government would consider?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. Right now going out and assisting by cutting trees in people's yards is not something that we look at when it comes to parks, but it is something that we've looked at in the

NiCE programme whereby the NiCE programme people could actually go and help out.

What I will commit to for the member is that I will actually look at and assess it and see what we have to do and bring it to the Government to see if I can get their support and then come back to this honourable House with it later on.

The Chairman: The Member for George Town Central continuing. Three questions to go.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chairman — about three questions, you're right, too.

I will just highlight to you that we had a discussion and I don't recall whether I did it with you but maybe with some of your NiCE programme coordinators about this, and the hurdle in the way is the insurance risk programme, so it would probably have to be expanded further with professionals, because tree-cutting is a very dangerous exercise, if I dare say, and our NiCE programme offering is just the general public coming to pick up light things and cut a little bush here and there. I think you would have to extend it to more than just the NiCE programme, unless you can find qualified people who apply to assist. That's just background information. I'll move on.

Mr. Chairman, I want to move now to the NRA for a little bit. First, I want to say thank you so much to the amazing staff you have at the NRA. The group there works tirelessly. I've worked with them whether it's through flooding, drains, making roads, and all that, and they deal with my annoying self quite often, so I give them credit for that and I thank them so much. If any of their representatives are here, I want you to pass it on to your team for all the hard work that they do; but there's something which is concerning for my constituency, and it's because George Town Central is in the heart of the capital.

We see that the NRA will repave roads, but do not adjust the sidewalks. You may have heard me speak about bus drivers driving up on the sidewalk — and a common place is right in front of Rohelio's, for those who know. When the bus comes, it pulls up right in front of Rohelio's and drops off, and what they don't realise is that they're parking on the sidewalk where the public is supposed to walk. It is a safety risk concern.

I've examined it within my constituency [and] all up Eastern Avenue we got similar situations where the road is exactly the same height as the sidewalk. That is a safety risk. What is the policy on repaving roads when it comes to sidewalks? Is it an obligation on the property owner or on the NRA to lift the sidewalk, or should the road not be going as high and they dig off the prior asphalt before they repave, because I see it starting to be common across all the places being repaved?

Can the Minister elaborate on why it is happening and what the policy is on it?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

The first part of the Member's question was the height of the sidewalk. Most sidewalks should be within 68 inches, and I understand that sidewalks in some of the older roads in Grand Cayman at that point in time used to be at four inches and that's why you see them so much lower than the new traditional sidewalks. Usually, when NRA goes in and repaves an area, we would have to uplift the sidewalks in those areas if such sidewalks belong to the Crown. Actually, not all sidewalks belong to the government; some belong to the landlords in the area, but uplifting, fixing and enhancing the area is something we look at.

Mr. Chair, I agree with the Member that we need to look at lifting many of the sidewalks because we see many cars parked on them, especially the ones that have been there for years, you know, so there are some that are going to be upgraded; as we come in to upgrade the roads, it is something that we need to look at — uplifting the sidewalk at the same time.

I will make sure that we take that on. I'm pretty sure I don't even have to pass that message on. The Director is here and he's already nodded his head. I know he's very good at taking notes, so he's already made note of that.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, through you, I am going to respectfully say to my good friend and colleague, *I will hold you accountable to this one, my brother*. This week, after Finance Committee, I'm going to take pictures of all the areas in my constituency and I will send them to you personally and cc [carbon copy] the director of NRA. Hopefully [there will be] a response within a reasonable period of time. This has been going on for years, my brother, and I am concerned somebody is going to die on the sidewalk in my constituency. I don't want that to happen, so I'm not trying to be difficult with you, bro. You know how much I love you. I respect you as a Minister, but this has to be addressed. All right.

My last area of questioning has to do with the NRA again, actually, and compulsory acquisition of property. Mr. Chairman, I have a constituent of whom the Minister is fully aware, and I'm going to air it publicly today because I'm tired of this exercise happening. I think the Minister spoke a bit about changes to the law for public acquisition for road purposes and the prices that they pay to people when acquiring their land for road infrastructure.

The current law, if my memory serves me well, is that whenever the gazettal happens, it is the price they pay you for the property. For example, I think the good former Member of this Parliament, the honourable Gilbert McLean, was key to the National Roads Strategy and gazetted roads since I think 30 years ago. Now, the government may not always get around to dealing with a gazette right away, and it could be many

years, decades later, and the law currently would basically, according to examples I've seen from the entities responsible for giving the quotations of the pricing for acquiring those properties, would be the property value at that time. Now, I think that's crazy. I think the Minister has recognised as much and he wants to change that, but in light of those changes to come, we have current circumstances before us — I give you an example.

I have a constituent who has just retired after 30 years in the civil service. Hard-working, dealing with special needs people. The only home that she has to her name in Rock Hole, the government gazettes a new road to go through. I think it's called Godfrey Nixon. NRA goes in, compulsory acquires the property, knocks her house down. Fortunately for her, she has a loving brother who has been housing her for a while, but she gets a little income off that house.

Not only does she retire and can't get her pension until almost four months afterwards as a civil servant — and I want every civil servant to hear this, because the Pensions Board has to do better. They're supposed to have a pension pay-out ready for any civil servant and not miss one month, because that could be the difference of whether someone eats or not, but let me not get distracted. Not only that happened, but now she has no income from her property that she had for herself, which NRA has knocked down. It's been almost three years since they've done it and have not paid her.

Here's what they want to do: In today's (2025) market, pay her 2018 housing replacement cost. Now she's a George Towner, happy to have her; but they want her to purchase a home, a dwelling, for \$105,000. You tell me where in Cayman you can buy a house for \$105,000, unless they go live — well, East End is a lovely place, but she's a George Towner and I don't even think you can get a house and a piece of land in East End for that amount.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: You're probably right about that, but my point is that it is inhumane to look at my people, particularly people who— and then they bog them down with applications' bureaucracy. *Well, you should file your claim for this and that*, when they know. They know! One of their own civil servants, yet they looked at her and said, *"I will offer you \$105,000 for your house"*, without even considering that her rental income is gone. The fact that she can't purchase anything else, and God forbid her brother was to sell her property today. She would be on the streets, and still can't get paid.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask the Minister: Please. He knows exactly which [property] I'm talking about. The matter needs to be dealt with.

Here's what happens in these cases. Government takes their land, barely wants to pay them their pension whereby they can't even put food on the table and they come to the MP which I'm happy to support

them. You imagine, this person today is applying to NAU. Applying to NAU for help when the government took their land and doesn't want to pay them a reasonable price. It has to stop.

In light of the Minister saying that changes are coming, I think whatever projected changes it should be the quantity of the valuation for her property today — and I haven't said any names here yet but in all due respect, Mr. Minister, because I am so tired of saying it over and over again to the relevant persons... If I don't see some action in the next three months, I'm going to embarrass the NRA and the evaluators. Now, they may be provisioned or obligated to laws that predate us, but a policy intent highlighted by the Minister today shows the government's intent. That should be enough to make a Cabinet paper to increase the property valuation to pay out the Caymanian so they can actually not be relying on the state for help, because you know the pensions they give you today are not enough to survive, so her little property is what she was hoping to use to retire comfortably in her own country.

Now, I would like to see this matter resolved. I am happy to see that the government has supported the Minister with a half-decent amount of money for land acquisitions — I think he should have gotten more; but I am asking, Minister, please, can you get this matter resolved?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

Mr. Chair, I would say about a month ago, somewhere around there, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of Opposition, came to see me at my office in the Government Admin Building about the same matter the Member is talking about now.

Mr. Chair, I just want to remind him that the *Gazette* that the road was going through was done long before I got in, and a part of the road was already through there. When we spoke we realised what the problem is — the way that the valuations are done. The evaluations are done at the time of the *Gazette* and depending on the time when the person gets paid, whether that land value went up; so we agreed that we will be looking at making the changes to that law to be able to do that and I had that in my speech earlier when I spoke about making the changes to that so the Member knows that we are working our way down there.

I hear his frustration when he talks about it. I've spoken to the lady, I know. My DCO has been there and had a conversation with them. We've walked them through, we want to come up with a resolution for this and we are going to come up with a resolution very swiftly for it, but we need to find— as a matter of fact, I think the Member actually came up with a creative way for us to resolve the matter, and we are even looking at how we can resolve the matter in such a way, [because] we thought it was a good way.

Hence, to come here today to air it out like we're not doing anything isn't right, because he knows that we are moving forward. Number one, with the changing of the law, because I do agree with you. There are people who were affected by *gazettes* years ago and never got paid, you know. The government put a gazette over their property, and so they can't do anything with it or, you know, they can't move; could never utilise all the property because this gazette is on it.

We need to be able to pay our people at the fair market price, so we are looking at making the changes. I can guarantee you that — that's another one you can hold me accountable for because I know my team is already progressing to move that section forward, right. As soon as we are able to get it into Cabinet and back into it, because it will take a law change to be done.

Now, I cannot tell you that I can go and tell the team to go ahead and do that knowing that the law hasn't been affected yet — that I will not say I'm doing; but I will tell you that we are looking at that particular case for how we can come up with a solution for that one person for you, as we spoke about with the connections of the houses in the certain area.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I can just thank the Minister for that commitment and wrap up by saying this: Cabinet has the authority and the remit and the discretion to increase the amount offered to any land owner based on merit and justification. I think the mere fact that there's been an agreement whereby there needs to be a change is enough foundation, when the Cabinet paper comes, to say *yes, the law says this but in light of the government's policy recognising that this is not a fair market valuation, the Government can make the decision to add on the relevant cost to reflect today's market prices*, which is only fair.

To be truthful, Mr. Chairman, there's no money that the market price can offer you to replace a house in George Town today. Even if they gave her \$300,000, to replace a home in Rock Hole today it would probably be at least half a million dollars, and I don't want to get into the specifics, but it is within the Cabinet's power.

Yes, you can't direct your members because the law has not changed, but there is room and discretion within Cabinet to pay our people appropriately because it's not only my constituent that is going through this, there are others— and you're right to say, and I want the record to show that the Minister has been working with me to resolve this; but like Arden would say, I trust but verify.

It's time for me now because I've been dealing with this even since when I was Minister and it still didn't get resolved, so I want to make sure I put it in the record because I am here to represent my constituents. I'm happy, I feel comfortable enough having the Minister

say he's going to deliver, so we'll go from there and leave it there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you. In accordance with—

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, very briefly to say that the member's point is well made. It's something we've discussed extensively in Caucus. We have other examples from last term in other constituencies. It is a true pain point. It will be resolved.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. During the break, I received queries from my constituents; they basically asked me to enquire with the Minister.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, that initiative the government had in East End, where they bought property and subdivided it to sell to Caymanians — are all those properties sold, or are any still available?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you.

Those properties have not been sold yet. When the new government got in, we were asked to look at how we could make the lots a bit smaller because we could actually get a few more affordable lots into it. That was something the land's team went back out to do, so they are actually looking at making the adjustments. As soon as those adjustments are done, we'll be able to put those lands up, but again, that was the pilot project that started in East End and we looked at whether we would like to find another location to be able to move that pilot project out further.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, thank you very much. The last question, Mr. Chairman through you to the Honourable Minister. I don't know whether it's the right Minister.

Sometimes the public wants to hold events at government facilities, but it is normally required to have some kind of liability insurance. I know, for example, the case of the Bodden Town Church Hall whereby recently, an event was held there and the person had to go and literally buy insurance. Even the Bodden Town School, given that the public is using it, are there any initiatives or anything being done that can help the public have more community events without having this cost of getting the insurance. It is very expensive insurance to actually have events at some of these government properties.

The Chairman: Member, that is something that finance and the Minister responsible for Lands will work on jointly and explore with the insurance providers, exactly

what the position is to get to the point of what you're referring to that such wouldn't be a requirement, because that would be cumbersome and impractical in reality.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

BLOCK VOTE:

**PAH 1, PAH 10, PAH 11, PAH 14
PAH 16, PAH 24, PAH 26, PAH 27
PAH 28, PAH 29
NHT 4, NHT 5, NHT 6, NHT 7
NGS 24, NGS 84
TP 60, TP 76, TP 84, TP 124
OE 93, OE 101, OE 123
EI 57, EI 71
EA 4, EA 9, EA 78
EA 148, EA 161, EA 164, EA 168**

The Chairman: Members, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question on the following output groups:

Appropriation	Financial Year 2026 \$	Financial Year 2027 \$
PAH 1	8,216,078	8,378,011
PAH 10	14,758,222	15,053,786
PAH 11	4,354,179	4,410,272
PAH 14	6,571,126	6,693,484
PAH 16	2,029,014	2,112,966
PAH 24	11,555,004	11,853,995
PAH 26	950,962	969,706
PAH 27	5,617,416	5,736,218
PAH 28	5,981,292	6,127,378
PAH 29	797,475	812,574
NHT 4	425,000	425,000
NHT 5	255,000	255,000
NHT 6	680,000	680,000
NHT 7	340,000	340,000
NGS 24	30,000	30,000
NGS 84	187,000	187,000
Transfer Payments		
TP 60	500,000	1,000,000
TP 76	200,000	200,000
TP 84	400,000	400,000
TP 124	250,000	250,000
Other Executive Expenses		
OE 93	122,000	122,000
OE 101	9,694,000	9,694,000
OE 123	5,000	5,000

Equity Investments		
EI 57	8,000,000	7,000,000
EI 71	4,500,000	5,550,000
Executive Assets		
EA 4	1,500,000	1,500,000
EA 9	1,500,000	1,500,000
EA 78	1,030,000	0
EA 148	14,095,000	13,450,000
EA 161	1,000,000	1,000,000
EA 164	800,000	0
EA 168	7,575,000	9,000,000

The Chairman: Honourable Members, I move a Motion to approve all the stated items on the Schedule to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: The stated items on the Schedule passed.

The Chairman: I want to thank the Honourable Minister of PLAHI and all of his staff for attending this meeting of Finance Committee, and providing the answers and support to the Minister.

I welcome the Minister to give his closing to his appearance and expert witness to the Finance Committee.

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chairman, thank you. It has been a long day [yet] we still got a long night ahead of us.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank all my staff who are here with me today. All of those who are still at the government building, even watching the proceedings going on now, are making notes. All those who are actually not in the Chamber with us but are behind the scenes, also making notes. Everyone who has been here with us from day one. They are committed. As you can see, it is a committed team that we have in the Ministry of Planning, Agriculture, Housing and Infrastructure; this is why we call it the go-to team to get things done. You can see how hard-working the team is.

To the 1000-odd members who make up this team, I wanted to say publicly thank you for all the hard work they do to make this government look good and make these Cayman Islands look good. Gentlemen, ladies — thank you. Directors, Chief Officers, Deputy Chief Officers, everybody in the finance section. Thank you. Am I missing anyone? I don't know, I don't want to

call anyone by name because I don't want to miss anyone, but I just want to say thank you to every single person that has been here.

I also want to thank my strong Parliamentary Secretary, Ms. Hunter, who has been helping me out. Many people don't see her because of how the camera is set, but she's been sitting behind me, getting me the feedback that I need from my team and helping me. I just want to say that we are committed to getting much of this done. Ms. Hunter is pleased to know that I know there are many road work networks that she's put in for— and I can tell you she's been advocating heavily for her West Bay people and not only for housing and road works, but for just about everything.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Yes, sir.

I just want to put it on record my thanks to PS Hunter for everything she has been doing. She's been with us over the last couple of days going through line item by line item, getting everything together as we continued to meet.

I also want to put on record, although I didn't mention it in any of the EAs that we were talking about, the commitment that we're making to building the restrooms for the Windsor Park, so the Member for George Town West can be happy knowing that we are actually looking at getting that done for you also, so we'll collaborate with you and the Deputy Premier on how that works. You both can decide which part of the fence you want to put them. I won't get involved in that. We'll leave it to your collaboration.

Thank you all. Again, I want to thank all Opposition members for all the questions they put forward today. If they didn't put the questions forward to get the answers out to the people, many people wouldn't know my story and the glory of what we do and would not realise the hard work this team really does; so I do thank the members for putting those questions forward, so that they can make the people see how good this team actually shines — Sorry, sir?

Especially the Member for George Town Central. We know he is going to be the lead asking all the questions, right; but again, thank you all. It's been a good journey with you all. Thank you for the money, and I am off to the races now to get my hard work done.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Thank you very much, Minister, for that comprehensive closing. We now turn our attention to Appropriations to the Minister for District Administration and Home Affairs.

I would ask all civil and public officers who are here to support Minister Nickolas DaCosta, Minister responsible for District Administration and Home Affairs, to please make your way to the Chamber to support the

Minister as we commence the questioning of his output groups.

[Pause]

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Members, before us are the appropriations to the Minister for District Administration and Home Affairs. I welcome to the Chamber his Chief Officer and his CFO. I think there are [also] a couple of Deputy Chief Officers.

DAH 1 - Policy Advice, Legislative Initiatives and Ministerial Services

The Chairman: I begin with output group DAH 1 – Policy Advice, Legislative Initiatives and Ministerial Services.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: I love numbers, not letters.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: DAH 1 – Policy Advice, Legislative Initiatives and Ministerial Services. I invite the Minister to give the Committee a brief overview and we commence questioning thereafter.

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

Not to repeat everything I said on Tuesday — I think I gave quite a comprehensive overview of the Ministry's plans for the next two years throughout this budget, but just to touch on a few things.

Similar to the previous Minister, the Minister for PLAH, who said that his Ministry touches every household well, Mr. Chair, this Ministry also touches every household throughout the Cayman Islands. Whether it be through rehabilitation, offender management, community wellness, border security, public safety in all senses, the Sister Islands' infrastructure and essential services, this Ministry does it all.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would beg that we dive straight in and pray and hope that I do not suffer the same fate.

[Laughter]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister.

Members, are there any questions on DAH 1? I would be interested to know, once we have questioned the Minister, whether members are minded to ask their questions generally and do a block vote, because I am certainly in favour of that.

Thank you.

Member for George Town Central, you caught my eye first, and then the Member for Bodden Town West.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and good evening to your support team. Those who are here, good evening to you. Thank you for all the good work that you do.

Let's start off fresh. First, can the Minister say for the Ministry departments, any government-owned companies or authorities that fall under him, have you considered a COLA for those entities for the next two years? A Cost of Living Adjustment increase for them?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, I thank the Member for the question. I think it was answered earlier by the Chair.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Oh, yes, you're right, the Chairman did say the whole of government has not considered the cost of living adjustment for the next two years. I apologise for the repetition. Can the Honourable Minister—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: We are starting off fresh.

I was very happy to hear about the investments that are going to be happening in our Sister Islands. As we share a special love for Cayman Brac, I'm very, very happy to hear about the investments by the Water Authority to ensure that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman get the same quality of service as we do in Grand Cayman.

Can the Minister elaborate further than what he said in his budget contribution and get into the specifics as to how much money is going to be invested and in what equipment? I see the budget documents highlight significant investments over the next two years. Maybe he is willing to go over them.

Thanks,

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair through you. The Water Authority is indeed continuing its fine stewardship of providing reliable, clean water to the people of the Cayman Islands.

In their 10-year capital development plan, they have significant investment in the Sister Islands. They have begun the hydrogeological process for exploring

the depth required for the abstraction wells and the brine disposal wells in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, because the plan is to build and carry forward The Bluff water works in Cayman Brac. To expand the reservoir as well as in 2026 to begin the process and fully roll out the RO (Reverse Osmosis) plant and infrastructure needed in Little Cayman in 2027.

The figures are contained within the Water Authority's published documents. I don't have them with me right now—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Page 943 of your Ownership Agreement.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Yes; so those are the figures.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: All right. Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister. The information he was referring to is actually in the Ownership Agreement document on page 943.

I want to turn your attention to page 942 if you can — you might want to get your document. In the document, your financial performance [actuals] for 2024 were \$42 million and for 2025 the ending projection is \$44 million; but what I've noticed, Minister, is that in 2026 it goes up to \$49 million and then in 2027 it goes up to \$54 million for sale of goods and services. Now, Mr. Minister, what I'm trying to get at is that the Water Authority sells water and that's a substantial jump of over 10 per cent next year and a whopping 20 per cent the following year. Where are those revenues coming from?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I beg your indulgence for one minute, please. Thank you.

[Pause]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, sorry for the wait.

Looking at the statement of cash flows of Water Authority on the page that the Member identified, the forecast for 2025 increasing from \$44.2 million to the projected increase amount of \$49.9 million in 2026 is a 1.3 per cent increase, which is a nominal increase in comparison to the sale of goods and the projected growth of the customer base, as well as a slight budgeted restructuring of expenses and how the operations are carried out.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Member is correct in respect to investment revenue, but the sales of goods and services is a different category — would you agree?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Sorry, Mr. Chair, I didn't say investment revenue. I was talking specifically to sales and goods of water.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: All right. Maybe we are looking at two different documents. I don't think so, but I am looking at page 942 of Ownership Agreement, under your Statement of Financial Performance and under revenue, the first line in the first month for the year 2024 you see the figure of \$42 million, and for 2025 you see the figure of \$44 million, and then you look at the figure for 2026 you see \$49 million — \$44 million to \$49 million is not a 1 per cent increase, Minister.

The Chairman: While the Minister gets assistance from his technocrats, I also know that the Grand Hyatt and ONE | GT are in that franchise area, so there are a number of large developments that are going to be coming on stream, which are going to be big customers for the Authority. Just to fill the gap while we're waiting on all the details on how the revenue increases are made up.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's always good to have input for analysis, but I would definitely say that ONE | GT would not make up 10 per cent of the consumption increase.

[Pause]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, in addition to that, there will be wastewater services for Grand Hyatt as well. Those figures identified project a 5 per cent increase in service across Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac, as well as an estimated rate increase of 3 per cent.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: You are increasing Water Authority fees?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: By 3 per cent. It's estimated in the budget, but we have to get approval.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: If it's in your projections...

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: We're hopeful, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Let me understand this, Minister.

It is your intention to increase the Water Authority fees for Caymanians by 3 per cent.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, we are planning to operate a business and be financially prudent in operations to ensure that we can continue serving the Caymanian people by gaining the revenue we need to supply them with the water that they need.

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

Mr. Chairman, can I move on to another little area? This is just for information purposes, so we can all understand where we are in respect to Water Authority. I think the Minister would agree that the Water Authority is a very important entity for the Caymanian people as it is probably the main essential service provider that has kept their prices down and kept the burden low on Caymanians; everything else is going up.

On page 943 of the Ownership Agreement, it talks about the cash flows, and if you see in the second row of focus, it says "Cash Flows from Investing Activities", and it talks about purchases of plant, property, and equipment. There seems to be an investment of over \$25 million next year and another \$51 million in 2027. Do you see it, Minister?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Yes, sir.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Can you tell me where the money is coming from?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, the Water Authority has funds being held on fixed deposits for capital investments they have planned for the next 10 years.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Minister. Great job. Thank you for the answers. That's it for me.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West; then the Member for George Town West and then Member for Cayman Brac East.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Continuing from George Town Central's Mr. Bryan's line of questioning, I noticed that for the Plan and Estimates, the forecast cash position for core government at the end of 2026 is \$428,629,000, and for the Entire Public Sector (EPS), the forecast cash position is \$857,023,000. In short, Mr. Chairman, and through you to the Honourable Minister, the core government cash is a little over \$428 million at the end of 2026, and in the SAGCs, the total amount of cash is also just over \$428 million.

I find it quite alarming that the subsidiaries or the companies owned by government are carrying the same amount of cash as the government itself and while I initially thought this was a fluke, when I look at 2027, Mr. Chairman, the total amount of cash forecasted for core government is \$470,697,000 and across the entire public sector is \$937,008,000; a difference of \$466,311,000. In short, Mr. Chairman, core government will be sitting on roughly \$471 million in cash, and the SAGCs will be roughly \$5 million behind at \$466 million in cash.

I raised that when I also looked at their compliance with the FFR [Framework for Fiscal Responsibility] and noticed that at the end of 2026 the government's total cash days is 91.6 days, which is 1.6 days above the 90 days' minimum requirement for cash reserves, so I'm begging the question, through you, Mr. Chairman, and recognising that the Water Authority is one such SAGC that carries a significant amount of cash.

Is it really in the government's and the people's best interests that the government's subsidiaries are carrying just about the same amount of cash as central government, when central government is the one that basically has the burden of maintaining the FFR and going out and borrowing cash; when there is a possibility that with a proper cash management and cash exercise some of the funds from the SAGCs can move into government which, in essence, would reduce central government's borrowing amount as a possibility.

Additionally, if it reduces the amount being borrowed by central government, it will also reduce the interest expense carried by central government so the question, through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister: Is there an exercise being done by his Ministry in terms of looking at the SAGCs under their remit to see what cash can be divvied up or transferred to central government to basically help the government to be a bit more compliant with the FFR because I think we can all agree that 1.6 days above the 90-day minimum is sailing a bit too close to the wind considering what just happened to our neighbour in the Caribbean and knowing how quickly things can turn.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, in all fairness, I'm not sure that is a question that I would ask the Minister to answer alone. What I can say is that I've had a discussion with him, the Premier, and all members of Caucus. It is something that we're going to be looking at from a policy perspective, whereby we have to finally coordinate the cash flow requirements of the Entire Public Sector. Now, anyone who doesn't like that, in my opinion, is going to have to be their problem.

My job is to cash manage the EPS; and in doing so, determine how to best leverage that cash to avoid interest costs, as you've pointed out, and ensure we time out how we manage cash across the entire public service to ensure that we are doing what is right

by the ultimate shareholders, which are the people of this country.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: For too long we have had varying agencies that have determined that they are going to simply refuse to remit moneys back to government. There will be the legislative change that is needed. That is the exercise that we are going to undertake. It is going to be incorporated into how we manage the finances of government. The management of finances of government has got to be rationalised and centralised through the Ministry of Finance. If the Ministry of Finance itself is going to have the tail wagging the dog, we will wind up doing what I inherited, what I saw when I entered this Parliament 25 years ago, and 12 years ago when I left.

It cannot continue, so what I can commit to this Committee is that it is a part of the exercise that we will be undertaking to ensure we put the right legislative framework in place. Ultimately, the public expects this body, this Ministry, to do the work; not any other board, not any other entity. They all are wholly-owned entities of the Cayman Islands government. It ultimately will be us who are blamed and truthfully *should* be blamed, if we continue to kick this can down the road.

Hence, we must ensure that we manage finances responsibly across the entire public sector because you're quite right, Mr. Saunders, we should not be going out and incurring interest costs that can be avoided. Those interest costs can deliver critical services. I can go to every Minister who is going to appear before this Committee and ask them a simple question: If I could give you \$2 million more — in some instances a million dollars more — for a financial year, what impact could that have on our people?

In many instances, the impact could be significant, and so we must ensure that we do what is right and be responsible in our management of government finances so I can commit to you that that is going to be a part— when I spoke to budgetary reform, that is one of the strands of the budgetary reform that I spoke to in my address; but I invite the Minister to respond directly.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

While you did mention, Mr. Chair, that there are instances of SAGCs that perhaps may be, I guess as I spoke about on Tuesday, “hoarding the money in the treasury” and not assisting the entire public sector, what I can say, Mr. Chair, through you to the member, is that Water Authority is one of those responsible SAGCs where perhaps even for government we have a two-year budget, a three-year SPS.

The Water Authority has always, very prudently, had a 10-year capital development plan

whereby they plan for 10 years. They manage their resources in their bank account to ensure that they don't need to come to government to borrow cash, to get interest-free loans from government or elsewhere. Water Authority has managed its cash in its account. If you look in the Ownership Agreement documents, you'll see that Water Authority is funding all of their capital expansion themselves, whether it be through their investments that they are holding, whether it's through their revenue. It is not just staying there doing nothing when government can use it. This is for services for the people; to ensure they get what they need and Water Authority is doing that well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Let me make sure that we're very clear and there are no mixed messages and mixed signals. I appreciate what the Minister has said — and that could very well be 110 per cent accurate. Someone has to grade this, and it's not going to be the Water Authority or any other Ministry, but the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has to ultimately take on this responsibility.

I'm not disagreeing with what the Member said, but what I'm saying is we have to have that level of reform so that analysis is done, this Committee gets the report and sees everything transparently. The public, therefore, knows what we're doing is hemmed up and we're doing it efficiently and we're timing it out appropriately — because much of this is not rocket science. As he quite rightly said, agencies are planning and so it's about coordinating all of those plans and ensuring that we cash manage appropriately.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, just to expand one thing for the Honourable Minister — and I recognise this is his first budget.

This is the Ownership Agreement for 2026 - 2027 — a very thick book. Included in this book are the Water Authority's forecasted financial statements, and they forecast how much cash it's going to use and the whole nine yards.

This is the Ownership Agreement from the last budget that forecasted the amount of cash the Water Authority was going to use during its two-year cycle.

This is the Ownership Agreement from the budget *before that*, which also forecasted the amount of cash the Water Authority was going to use as per the budget.

Mr. Chairman, I have gone through and looked at all the forecasted cash usage from the two previous budgets, and I don't think I need to go any further. What I can say to you is: saying that you're going to spend something and don't spend it, or saying you want to use

something and don't use it sitting on cash while the country is still incurring interest expenses *ain't gonna work*. I already knew what your answer would have been; and I also knew what the Minister's response would have been, thus the reason I could come with these two previous ownership agreements and basically say that the cash was not being managed or used wisely across the entire public sector.

I'm happy to hear about the reform you're talking about because I am really hoping that this will be the last ownership agreement whereby the cash continues to grow within the SAGCs while the central government, as you said, is incurring interest costs when funds can be going to help housing assistance to help people in terms of putting people in homes and can even put more money towards scholarships. What we can't have, as you rightfully said, is the central government paying 2, 3, 4, \$5 million a year more in interest when funds could be used elsewhere while the SAGCs, subsidiaries of government — the children of government — are carrying as much money as the parent. Which household in Cayman do you know, where the children have almost as much money as the parents, yet live under the parents' roof?

Thus, I welcome the reform and anything I can do to help, but this now needs to stop and I'm very happy to hear that you'd be looking to manage the money centrally and save the costs.

The Chairman: Thank you, member. Any further questions?

The member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker, Elected Member for George Town West: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you, Mr. Chair, can the Minister identify when the last increase pertaining to water supply in the Cayman Islands was?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: In the Cayman Islands, or in the franchise area of the Water Authority?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Water Authority. Thank you.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, through you. The last rate increase that was approved for Water Authority was in 2019.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman— Oh, sorry.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, through you. Can you identify what that increase was?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, this may not be gospel, but the recollection may be that it could be around 2 or 3 per cent.

The Chairman: The lady member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To the Honourable Minister: as it relates to paving and maintenance of roads in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman, there were several that have been dug up so that we could provide very necessary water; and I know you started maintenance in the Spot Bay area, but the Watering Place area in particular — and I think there are probably one or two in the Creek area — needs urgent, urgent attention for safety reasons more than anything else.

I would like to have a commitment as to when this would be addressed?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. I thank the Member, my colleague for the question, and I totally agree with her.

The road paving continuing down from North-east Bay into the Creek because, as the Member stated, it is a safety concern, will begin early in 2026. What we are attempting to do right now is to do the most affected areas with the turn in the road in Spot Bay. That was a dangerous driving area, but also the dust, et cetera caused in the Creek as well as the West End road crossings. That is going to be our priority in reinstating the road areas for 2026.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple, actually.

Can the member confirm whether or not the Creek and Spot Bay Primary School have now been connected with water as the mains have passed through those areas some time now?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you. We do believe that the Creek Infant's site has been connected to pipe water, but I'm not entirely sure about the Spot Bay Junior's site. Perhaps when the Ministry of Education is here they could confirm whether they have been connected.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Through you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if the Honourable Minister is in a position to give an anticipated time for the water work

to commence upwards onto The Bluff, and in particular to the new school and the biggest subdivision and other areas there because, as you know, it's much more expensive to get truck water. Next year it will be a little more expensive based on what the George Town Central [sic]. It's been a long time coming since 2019 that it had an increase.

I would like to get that indication because since Ivan and Paloma, more persons are now building on The Bluff and it's always good to expand the clientele.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you to the Member.

Certainly, it is definitely important to get piped water, a more reliable water source for the people of Cayman Brac. One of the issues we're facing with expanding through those additional phases on the Bluff is the pressure coming from all the way in West End to the East up on the Bluff. That is why we're working expeditiously with the board right now to proceed with the pre-works for the Bluff water works.

When that is in place, we can have more reliable service on the Bluff for those customers because I know that there are more than 400 households on the Bluff at this time. Certainly, the Bluff area is growing, as you stated, so we're seeking to get that done as quickly as possible and find a route that will provide reliable service to the new school without diminishing the pressure for everyone below.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As it relates to the child care services on the Bluff. Is there a waiting list for that centre and if so, are there any plans to give the needed expansion that was previously planned?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you to the member.

Yes, there is a waiting list at the day care, and it is included in the budget to add additional classrooms at the day-care centre. What I can say is that earlier this year, post election, there were concerns with how the waitlist was being managed, not as the standard with, for example, the Ministry and Department of Education, so we have done what we needed to do to ensure that Caymanians have access to the day care services first as a priority. Until such time that the additional classrooms are completed, we want to ensure that any spaces that become available go to Caymanian families.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just to follow on if you would so permit, I can say that was not ministerial, neither his Ministry nor mine. It was a local policy decision that was made, and we became aware of it through social media. I'm glad to hear it's been rectified.

If I could just move quickly then to — and I'm still on page 127 — where you refer to the shelters that are maintained.

If you could, just for the sake of the record, confirm the number of shelters. The reason I am asking, Honourable Minister, is because with the recent [Hurricane] Melissa that we thought was coming — thank God it did not come — there was some hesitation about the utilisation of the West End Primary School because of where we were in the school calendar and I think that ought to be sorted out.

I mean, obviously, I have my thoughts about the \$6 million that was saved, but seeing what has happened to Jamaica, I think we need to have a sit down again as to what obtains with the use of schools with that type of hurricane and the impact it would have not just on Cayman Brac but the entire Cayman Islands.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you, I can confirm to the Member that the shelters in Cayman Brac are the West End Primary School, the Aston Rutty Civic Centre, and the multipurpose hall; those are the registered shelters in Cayman Brac. As the Member stated, and she is certainly correct, it does create some disruption when we have to mobilise the shelter in the West End Primary School.

Currently, the multipurpose hall is being used partly for storage of materials for ongoing capital projects that are being incurred right now — the new high school included, the Mondo track at the sports field... As soon as those are done we plan to retrofit the multipurpose hall to ensure it can be used as a shelter once again; as well as the accommodation block project completed under the last administration which will be added as a resource for emergency services and a command centre for essential services during storms.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With reference to the accommodation section, could the Minister give an update as to what obtains there, please?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Through you to the member, Mr. Chair, the accommodation block has finally received the Special Certificate of Occupancy (SPO) as there were issues with the inspection whereby it could not receive a Certificate of Occupancy (CO). We are awaiting a pump for the fire suppression system, which should be installed shortly, and then we hope to get a full CO.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I took note with interest that there is a proposed allocation under EA 125 for the Cayman Brac Multipurpose Hall being \$150,000 for 2026, and \$100,000 in 2027.

Can the Honourable Minister give us an insight as to what that is expected to cover? I think there was a recent communication that there's going to be some 20 per cent increase in our freight charge by Thompson Shipping — has that been taken into consideration with these costs that are here?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you.

As I said, this Appropriation for the Cayman Brac Multipurpose Hall is to remediate the space that is currently being used by the contractors for the new school — the offices, the bathrooms, the kitchen, because we want to ensure that this hall can be used by the school as well as the community. The figure is anticipated to incorporate all anticipated fees and expenses needed to complete it over the next two years, and I trust it is enough to cover what's needed.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Without putting words in the Honourable Minister's mouth, Mr. Chairman, perhaps he may want to consider that *if I need more funds I'll be coming back to the House*, because based on experience, I can tell him this will just barely pay for the kitchen cabinets.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you, I won't even wait for you to call on me for that one but I will reassure the member that following in her footsteps, Mr. Chair, anything that Cayman Brac or Little Cayman need, this Minister will be pounding down every single one of my colleagues' doors to get it — in an exceptional circumstance.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With reference to EA 55 – Cayman Brac and Little Cayman Roads, I see there's a significant drop to half a million for next year and then up to \$1.5 million in

the following year. I wonder if you could give some justification for that; I mean, I greatly support the Minister, my good friend for North Side and the need for the roads here, and he knows he has my full support for that at all times, but we haven't seen levels like this must have been since before “Mr. Cho-cho” days.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair through you. Thank you very much.

I do thank the member for being so astute in noticing that and looking out for the people of Cayman Brac. The reduction to \$500,000 for 2026 comes about because of our work trying to balance priorities for a national budget.

Historically, over several budget cycles, we have seen the Appropriation level to be \$1 million each year, which is \$2 million for two years; what we have had to do is to rebalance how the appropriations are done for 2026 and 2027, whereby we have \$500,000 in 2026 and \$1.5 million in 2027, which still gives you \$2 million, but rebalanced. As I said earlier, it is our plan to be very pointed in the work that's done in 2026 but of course, as I alluded to just now, in an exceptional circumstance, if additional funds are needed, there are mechanisms that can be used.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chairman take this as it's given: When we obtain more than the forecasted 10-point-something million dollars in surplus this year, perhaps that would be a good cap-in-hand ask for early for Q1 of next year, to up to \$500,000 for this vote, which is wholly insufficient.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I just need a clarification, Mr. Chairman, on EA 171 – Infrastructure Works in the Sister Islands. If the Honourable would take this opportunity to elucidate that, please?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Sure.

Mr. Chair, through you. Good observation, Member. EA 171 – Infrastructure Works in the Sister Islands, is several different previous executive asset appropriations that have now been merged.

We previously had an executive asset line item for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman street lighting; cemetery vaults for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman; storm drains and deep wells; Little Cayman Playfield; Cayman Brac public parks, as well as Sister Islands' boat launch ramps. They've now all been merged into one executive asset Appropriation for infrastructure works in the Sister Islands.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair.

Can the Minister say whether through this merging process the end result is a reduction, status quo, or an increase?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I can say there was a slight decrease with the merger, but nothing significant that compromises any one of the infrastructure line items that comprise EA 171.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As it relates to TP 86 – Sister Island Beaches and Community Clean Up Programme of \$600,000 each [year], can the Minister confirm that this will maintain the three weeks per month, and has there been any consideration — and this is not undue pressure, because I did try and didn't succeed, so I'm being cautiously optimistic that you will — that there would be positive and affirmative consideration for them to receive the normal benefits of insurance up to and above the workman compensation insurance that we take out; some type of pension allocation.

The resistance that I got was that they did not want to add to the number of civil servants and the cost, but at the end of the day, it is a programme that's been working extremely well. They've kept the roads meticulously clean, they work assiduously, and I believe it is now bordering on inhumane for us to maintain that they should not get these rights, so any advance that you make with that, I'd be more than happy to support it.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you.

First, let me echo the member's sentiments about the hard-working men and women of the TP 86 Crew, as we call them in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman — the Sister Islands' community clean-up crew. They certainly have dedicated day in and day out to ensuring that Cayman Brac and Little Cayman are pristine in appearance, whether it be roadsides, whether it be government properties, they are working assiduously to keep it in tip-top shape.

What I can say is that since day one, as I know has been tried in the past, we have been trying to find a way forward to ensure there is equity and equitable treatment for those members of that team and we are working on a solution. I'm sure that soon we'll have something to update you on because I know that having had the opportunity to fight for the same thing and get resistance, you could provide input as well, so we are putting together a proposal to enhance the Programme, so to speak.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Then, Mr. Chairman, the Watering Place bathroom that was started in January of this year yet still has not got the roof on. [Hurricane] Melissa didn't take that; it just hasn't got it yet.

I wonder whether the Honourable Minister could look at the whole project management and the speed of the work because this has to be quite dismal for other projects that may come on board within the next four years. We try to give it in-house to Public Works, so if you could give an update as to what's held it up? Sometimes I get inspection/planning issues, sometimes I get that it is materials. Most times I pass by, I see people sitting down; not really doing anything, so it appears to be more of a project management [issue].

I'm not sure whether he is looking to upgrade, enhance, augment the project management at Public Works, because that's one of many projects as I drive up and down and I'm sure he's been to Cayman Brac and drove up and down. Before they would get up when they saw a [government] official coming; now even that doesn't happen anymore.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

The bathroom project in Watering Place Gardens is indeed being done in-house by the Public Works Department. The project manager is based in Cayman Brac through the Ministry, and I've been reliably informed that it is still anticipated that the bathroom block in Watering Place Gardens will be finished next month — December 2025.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I will leave that topic alone in the interest of my friendship with the Honourable Minister.

[Laughter]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chairman, EI 93, Equity Investment in District Admin for next year — \$13-plus million and a reduction of about \$600,000 or so in 2027. I wonder if the Honourable Minister could give some indication as to what is envisioned for this particular vote for the Sister Islands.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

For EI 93 we have quite a number of capital purchases going forward in the Sister Islands mainly through district administration. The one highlight that I

am especially excited about is the completion of the district admin building renovations.

Through EI 93 we're also supporting the Joy Marie Tibbetts Adult Training Centre with a wheelchair-accessible bus for the clients there. We're also supporting the Sister Islands' Sports Unit with office furniture, with goals, with other materials supporting their programmes.

We are replacing faded signage around the island. As I mentioned earlier, we are continuing to renovate the old day-care centre near District Admin.

We're also buying additional heavy equipment for Public Works that's needed, in addition to what they received last year.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To the Honourable Minister: Is there any allocation for the remediation of the Lands and Survey building that was in the Bight which they had to vacate; perhaps the Minister could say the reason why they are still at the Creek Community Centre.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you.

To answer the question, the work that needed to be done at the office housed in the Bight was due to air quality issues within the space. There was excessive circulation of old air, so the quickest thing to do was to relocate the two government departments out of that house and move them into the Creek Community Centre. As of right now, that is where they're going to be based until we can ensure that all of the work that needs to be done at the Bight House is complete.

As the member is aware, but for the benefit of all honourable members, this relates to the Sister Islands Affordable Housing Development Corporation as well as the Lands and Survey Office in Cayman Brac — they share those office suites.

The Chairman: The honourable member continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Can the Honourable Minister give some indication as to when we can expect this work, and the reason I am asking is two-fold: the proximity of the Lands and Survey equipment and essential data to the sea there at The Creek; and that it was designed for a community centre and as he would fully know, Mr. Chairman, the Spot Bay community centre is now being used, and we would like to get the use of that building.

Lastly, the Cotton Tree Bay building that we were trying to get for another community centre, whether any funds are allocated to that so that we can truly get into the culture and heritage and complete the Caymanisation and social engineering that was commenced prior.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, knowing how important those community centres are to a strong community, it is our goal to ensure that Lands and Survey and the Affordable Housing Development Corporation do make their way back to their intended space, so we are working to ensure that happens fairly quickly.

The Chairman: Honourable Member.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chairman, I have many more, but I'm just going to ask one more; I can always find out offline.

We had purchased a property next to the West End Community Park and I noticed it had still been locked up. The reason I have concerns is that, as you would probably know, that property is one of our heritage properties and it contains a tremendous number of artefacts and when I last visited, it looked as if one of the screens had been intruded upon plus, it also looked like there might have been a leak in it.

I can tell you it would be a travesty if care is not taken to secure it and preserve it because it was not an easy acquisition.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, thank you very much and yes, I can definitely say it is important to preserve that house. I do thank the member and the previous administration for securing that historically important property in Cayman Brac for the community.

The Ministry is excited to continue working with the Ministry of Culture and Heritage next year and beyond to expand the programmes and offerings in Cayman Brac. I know the heritage coordinator in Cayman Brac, through district admin, is excited. She has ideas for programmes and what can be housed in the house, so we're looking to expand it and quite excited to do so.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Honourable Member for Bodden Town East.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Further to the discussion about the Water Authority — I heard you talking about The Bluff, et cetera. Can the Minister say whether the process for water in both Grand Cayman and Cayman Brac is the reverse osmosis process?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair through you. Yes, sir. It is.

The Chairman: Member continuing.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In terms of the monitoring, will there be surveillance cameras also? Electronic monitoring. You're, the Minister [with responsibility] for surveillance cameras, right?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Yes, sir.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Okay. Well, maybe it's the wrong vote, but in terms of surveillance cameras, it is obviously a pet peeve of mine. I see that in other countries, surveillance cameras can work for the benefit of solving crimes, and I don't know exactly how strategic we are and what we have done so far.

I know we have some cameras throughout the Islands but there have been recent murders and the likes in my area in Bodden Town and other areas that have gone unsolved and in fact, in the same area we had the hit and run of a person just walking on the Anton Bodden Road that wasn't solved either. That person has been deceased for many years and I haven't heard anyone...

I don't know if someone has done a table top exercise and come up with a strategy. Sometimes I hear we are ordering just 20 cameras; it is like we are just trying to piece-meal it, but we really need to put a big effort into trying to have a fool-proof system where at least we can narrow things down. Has there been any progress in that?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

What I can say is that DPSC, the Department of Public Safety Communications, has a really good relationship with RCIPS, with the police service. For example, very recently, we expanded the national CCTV system in Cayman Brac and that was based on input from RCIPS on key strategic locations because we all know that we can't be in all places at once. Cameras are important. As you said, there have been murders, there have been deaths, there have been car accidents. If nothing else, a security camera in our national system can provide a family with closure.

Three years ago last month, Mr. Chair, I lost a very good friend of mine on Queens Highway. Blind spots; hardly anyone is there on that road but had cameras been there, it would have helped the family. I know that DPSC is constantly reviewing the strategic areas that need visual sight and working with RCIPS to ensure that those areas are covered, to enhance how we patrol, how we secure and how we protect.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Minister.

I mean, the roadways are how people get about the place; they're not going through the bush, so

99 per cent of the time they're on the roads, but thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I would like to ask a question about prison services. I know you may have touched on some of this in your eloquent speech and presentation, but I know for years now, I mean, I sat on the prison board over 20 years ago, even before being elected. From that time, I know we had condemned West Bay and George Town lock-ups and the prison after doing evaluations there. Deplorable shape; but I'm also in the mind of education rather than incarceration. I think that's what all prefer.

For years the Ministers have come with \$100 million renovation projects and otherwise, and other piecemeal things and I know it's not the Ministers' fault that it hasn't got through but you know, we're running the government and you got a Caucus; everybody needs to split the money and you know, if you use \$100 million that's a lot, 1/10 or more. What approach are you taking in terms of trying to upgrade — because I know you had leaks at some point — and at least making it a humane rehabilitation centre [which] is what it should be. Any thoughts there or any discussions with the Caucus?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair through you. Member, that has been the greatest problem — the money that it takes; and there hasn't been a plan since the prison was condemned in 2005 because, as you rightfully stated, when you come saying I need to build a new prison, it's \$100 million, you're never going to get it; so what we have done in this budget is recognise that we can only attack it in small pieces. Therefore, in addition to remediation work whereby we are fixing the electrical work at Fairbanks, we are doing kitchen renovations at Northward, we are replacing the wastewater treatment plant at Northward, the wastewater treatment plant at Fairbanks — all these things to bring them up to code right now.

We have included appropriations for the new prison-build in here, probably the most it has ever got, and I think all of my colleagues will attest that I fought tooth and nail to ensure that this came in. They did support; let me just say, they did support, but we ensured we got something, so the design has been done for a new prison — that has always been worked on.

What we are doing now is approaching it in such a way that we don't try to build it out all at once, but [instead] attack and achieve the most critical areas, the most critical phases: the accommodation wings, the utility spaces, the classrooms, all of those because, as I said in my contribution on Tuesday: We need to start thinking differently about rehabilitation and prisons need to move away from being a place of incarceration alone to a place of restoration as well.

There are monies included in EI 93 for the prison, to do what we can within the next two years.

The Chairman: The Member continuing.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Thank you for that answer, Minister.

One last question regarding the Cadet Corps. What data do you have in terms of persons going through the cadet core and transitioning to real-time service and employment as police, prison, fire officers? Do we have any data on that?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the member for the question.

While the Cadet Corps has always been about instilling leadership skills and discipline in hopes that they find their way into the uniformed services, the pathways through to the Fire Service, to the Coast Guard, to the Police [Service], the focus on that, and the strong partnerships, is pretty new.

I don't have exact figures of how many have gone through the fire cadets, the sea cadets, and so on, but I can say that there was one cadet that joined the Coast Guard in February of this year through one of those pathways and that cadet — forgive me, but I think the position is probably Able Seaman or something in the Coast Guard — was the highest-scoring recruit of the class. Clearly the cadet core pathways, those partnerships, are working, and I know that as we go on, we'll begin to see more and more progress in making our young Caymanians feel valued in those uniformed branches.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair, thank you and I thank the Minister for that. I do believe the next cohort of leadership in our police, prison, coast guard and fire can actually come from [the Cadet Corps] and I think we should be very intentional about how we restructure the Cadet Corps.

I thank you for your answers and thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me.

The Chairman: Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair; through you to the Minister.

A quick question going back to the Water Authority. Does the Authority pay a dividend to the Treasury?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Let me just preface this by saying that I don't work at Water Authority anymore, you know; but yes, Mr. Chair,

through you to the Member, the Water Authority does pay a dividend to the government.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: May I ask how much it is these days?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Every year, \$250,000 and— sorry, if I may continue, that is based on the formula produced by the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Through you, Mr. Chairman. In terms of the Domestic and Aerodrome Fire Services, is the Aerodrome section of the fire services fully staffed at this time?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you.

The Aerodrome division of the fire service is in full compliance and we have a current cohort of 28 recruits which bolsters the number further.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Through you, sir, to the Minister. You said 28 crews?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Recruits.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: *Recruits.* Oh, my apologies; I withdraw my question, then. I'm fine, sir. Thank you.

The Chairman: The lady Member for Cayman Brac.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: The lady Member for Cayman Brac caught my eye first. Sorry.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It slipped me, but I made a note to ask the Honourable Minister whether the curbing machine that was ordered arrived on the Brac—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Yeah, for the Mondo track, because I'm reliably informed that the material for the Mondo track has been sitting there, but that's irrespective of the fact.

I want to get an indication of when we can get the tracks in because it's been dug up since January and we haven't been able to utilise it. If you can give me some comfort that we could get the material out of the containers and onto the track.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you to the Member. The machine and the material are there and we also want to

lay the material down, because we are cognisant that the longer it stays in the container... We actually have some of the material stored in the multipurpose hall to protect it.

The procurement, the contract, et cetera, has just successfully passed through the PPC (Public Procurement Committee), and the contract will be signed imminently to lay it all down, curb it, and complete it. The goal, and the wish I have passed on to the team, is to have it completed before quarter two of next year.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: The Member for Red Bay, Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Through you, sir.

This returns to the Water Authority. I think I'm looking at the correct data here; what I'm seeing states that by the end of this year the Water Authority is expected to have reserves of over \$78 million. Is that correct?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Just one minute, please, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to note that if the listening audience is hearing a loud banging outside, it's because of the George Town Heritage Day fireworks.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Member for George Town Central. I was going to clarify that soon to ensure they didn't think it was any actions you were taking from all your questioning here in Finance Committee.

[Laughter]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chairman, just to help the Member. I'm looking at the Ownership Agreement, page 945. Restated balance 31st December, 2025.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, that's correct.

The Chairman: The member continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you. I thank the member for the confirmation as well. I've been sitting here pondering, Mr. Chairman, and I understand that the Water Authority plans forward for 10 years; but with that amount of cash...

I have great respect for the Water Authority, but I'm having a hard time understanding why there would be a need for a 3 per cent increase on folks; 3 per cent may not sound like much, but it cascades through the economy. The stores, everybody, use water, so I'm just trying to understand how we would justify it given that

people are still having a tough time. Why would we be looking to increase rates at this point, even if it's 3 per cent?

Thank you.

The Chairman: While the Minister confers, Mr. Tatum, what would probably be useful is an analysis of the average bill. I think that's more helpful than just talking about 3 per cent whereby we talk about an average Caymanian and their bill; and what that uplift typically means per month, because this is spread over thousands of households.

We need to be very much cognisant of the fact that, as the Minister said, the Authority needs to remain in a position to be able to build out the very infrastructure that customers need and do it in a responsible way without having to then come for government to have to fund it and pay interest on it.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: If I could just add, Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry to interrupt you, that I agree with you, which is why I said, *but it has a cascading impact on the economy as a whole.*

I did the calculation on my own bill, right, but that's Roy Tatum earning whatever I earn. The point I'm making is that I'm still struggling — the Minister will answer, so I'll be quiet. I'm still struggling to understand why we would be looking at doing an increase, but I'll be quiet and let him answer.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I will do my best to explain how you achieve short-term, medium-term, long-term capital goals with a directive that you are not allowed to borrow. That is the simple truth. The Water Authority received direction in the past, and it still stands, that they cannot borrow, so they've been very prudent in ensuring that they have what they need to outlay the capital works necessary over the next 10 years.

When you compare their short-term, medium-term, and long-term needs, that \$78 [million] may look big now, but once they start building out in the immediate future, it's going to be depleted very soon. When you think about The Bluff Water Works in Cayman Brac, the expansion in Little Cayman, the additional RO storage tank that's needed at Red Gate because of the growing population in central Grand Cayman, the new site in North Side that's needed for the growing population in the Eastern districts—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Oh, hi, Minister.

All that is needed, I think that, while it is a big number now, it can disappear very quickly, so I agree with the Minister of Finance on our position.

As we like to say, we need to look at doing things differently for the future to spread the love; but the Minister of Finance and the duly abled Financial Secretary and the team will, of course, review all of these reserves, finances and capital development plans to ensure that what they are saying makes sense. That they're planning wisely, and whether it can be re-deployed somewhere else.

We spoke about the need for the 3 per cent. Well, the 3 per cent is necessary in the future because if you maintain the current levels without any kind of increase, you won't be able to achieve anything and you'll soon end up in a deficit and won't be able to contribute \$250,000 to government. When the Authority was looking at the rate increase, which, by the way, as per the Water Authority Act and the Water Authority Regulations, Water Authority is actually enabled [and] entitled, through the Act, to increase rates at this time by 15 per cent.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: The Board of Directors, the management, and the government of the last administration [and] this administration do not agree with such a stark increase for the Caymanian public. That's not what we are trying to achieve; we're trying to achieve financial responsibility to hop along.

A 3 per cent increase for an average residential customer in Grand Cayman increases the monthly bill by \$2.68; for commercial customers, \$9.92 per month. In Cayman Brac, the average residential customer will see an increase of \$2.05 and commercial accounts \$10.43 per month. Again, this is something that OfReg (Utility Regulation and Competition Office) is reviewing with the board and management of the Water Authority.

It is up to OfReg to give its approval, but considering what is entitled under the law, and what the board and government have looked at—and the board has agreed to only do 3 per cent to try and help continue the work of supplying water to the country. It's nominal and it should not cause a dramatic effect on the people.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: The Member [for Bodden Town West].

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Sorry, I need to... I can't hold this, I'm sorry; and I thank the member for giving me—

The Chairman: You can't hold your water?

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, I can't hold it.

Mr. Chairman, this is a classic case of majoring in a minor and I'm going to tell you why I said it.

For 2024, the Water Authority had revenues of \$46,852,984 — \$46, almost \$47 million and its net profit was under \$745,000. Think about this: Almost CI \$47 million in revenues, and \$745,000 to the bottom line. For this year, for 2025, the Water Authority is forecasting \$49,187,289 in revenues and \$237,000 to the bottom line. I want to put this in layman's terms: \$49 million in revenue and less than \$250,000 to the bottom line. We always complain about privatising profits and socialising losses. This is a valuable service that the Water Authority provides to the country. Those banks last year— US \$986 million in revenue, \$752 million to the bottom line; pushing their employees out the door with no health insurance, and we are whining about \$237,000 for an institution?!

You all understand that everybody needs water? This is what we are spending time on while the banks are ripping our people off? Come on now, man! Do better than this! \$237,000 on \$49 million revenue. Every other entity in this country is ripping Caymanians off, and we are ranting over \$237,000? Out of \$49 million in revenues? Vote on this thing and move on, man! Jesus Christ.

The Chairman: I just want to add one little piece to the analysis of that entity. Member, you are quite right; whilst the total revenue is \$49 million, I draw your and in particular Mr. McTaggart's attention to the fact that of that \$49 million, \$4 million is investment revenue. In other words, unless their accountant can give me some magic, that means they've made a loss on ordinary operations.

I am not going to sit here and have us talk about a 3 per cent increase and make it sound like an average— Minister, can you give me the commercial average?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Two dollars and sixty-eight cents.

The Chairman: For household bills, \$2.68. How much for businesses?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: For businesses, \$9.92.

The Chairman: \$9.92. Now, let us not dramatise that this is going to have some huge ripple effect — and Mr. Bryan, let me be very clear.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Hm. I am listening.

The Chairman: Yeah. Yeah. Make sure you understand now. This is real talk about what has actual real economic ripple effects. This is not going to have any huge ripple effect throughout this economy. It is not. The entity needs the revenue. This is very clear. Are we going to admit that the entity needs the revenue and

it has hardly ever gotten an increase because it's government-owned?

I live in the district of West Bay and I can tell the world: very rarely do I have any West Bayer come to me complaining about the cost of the Cayman Water Company whose rates are higher.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Higher; so let's talk about the Cayman Islands.

One set of people pays more, the other set pays less. What do people complain about? The cost of food, the cost of electricity. I don't have anybody come to me with any big complaints about the cost of water. The cost of water in this country, compared to the market size, is relatively low. This 3 per cent increase is not going to have any hugely harmful effects on our people or the economy, but this entity does need to have the capacity to survive financially.

Right now, if you look at these numbers and take out investment revenue every year, it means it's in deficit. Anyone wants to try to figure out why they're holding on to their cash?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Are you finished, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chairman, I wasn't finished earlier. I was interrupted.

The Chairman: Sorry.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chairman, this is Finance Committee. You want to understand something, you ask a question. I have zero understanding for why my colleague to my left got so animated. I honestly don't. I don't intend to follow him in that vein. I didn't appreciate it, sir, but that's fine.

This is Finance Committee. I had a question; I have a right to ask a question. If I have a concern I have a right to say I have a concern.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: There was an explanation given; you offered an explanation. I listened a long time to the honourable member. I won't belabour the point anymore, but as we proceed here for whatever number of days, I really hope that members respect when questions are asked.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: And respect my ability to ask, too; trying to shut me down earlier.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: No, no, I wasn't trying to shut you down at all. I said—

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Tried to shut this block vote then tried to shut me down. You want play to politics? Let's go.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chairman, I will leave it at that, sir. Thank you.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Order. Order, members.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Question?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, sir. There is.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: For once I am not the one causing the trouble so let's move on.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister in light of the circumstances in Jamaica. There are many family members of Caymanians who may have been affected, particularly in the East side of Jamaica — Saint Elizabeth, Montego Bay, and so forth.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: The West. Sorry, I apologise. I can make a mistake, you know, Mr. Chairman. Wow. Getting fireworks. Okay.

To the West of Jamaica — and as a result, there may be a high probability of visa applications particularly for children, [or people] who may want to come and stay with their children maybe for a period of time. I remember when [Hurricane] Ivan hit, many of us went to other parts, particularly Cayman Brac. Now, I know this may be touchy for some people in this room, considering the fact of any Jamaicans being here, because I am already starting to see some faces; but there are Caymanian children in Jamaica.

The question I'm getting at is whether the Minister is aware or concerned about any hindrances in the visa application for persons who may want to come over as a way of relief, if they have persons here who can help take care of them from an affordability perspective, until their circumstances back home are in a

better state, and I'm specifically talking about the elderly and children.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As it relates to the elderly and children, there are no hindrances. The Member may be aware that children under the age of 15 and elderly persons above the age of 70 do not need a visa to come, so there's no hindrance to them entering Cayman.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, kind Minister, and you are 100 per cent correct. I was thinking about persons outside of that parameter, on either fringe of those age brackets, who would still be considered a dependent in some capacity; but I think you are aware of the circumstances and, I'm assuming, being mindful even to those who may be in dire [need], because I know the visa requirements do not talk about persons with disabilities or persons who have lost everything, who may have loved ones here. Whether it is provisions for them to visit for a short period of time or what have you, I've brought it to your attention. I think I'll leave it there.

The other one, Mr. Chairman, even though a 3 per cent Water Authority increase is still going to affect the people no matter how much your increase is. You see, sometimes we forget the pocket. If you have nothing, half a per cent is a little bit [*sic*], but I digress.

In respect to CBC 2, when we were leaving office, the last administration, we got an indication that there would be access to the United States' database for our authorities at CBC to identify potential criminals or persons of interest. Can you update us on whether that is still the case or not?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, and I'm right there with you; I cannot wait until we have access to that database because, as I said in my contribution on Tuesday, CBC is both guardian and gateway. They are the first guardians to our security in this country, and the more resources that we can provide for them to better do their job, to protect us, the better.

Right now, we have been working with the Governor's Office to formalise the arrangement with the United States — because it's a bilateral agreement, it goes through that channel; but it is progressing quite well. The budget does include funds to roll it out, so as soon as we get those steps taken care of we're even better protected.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Minister. That's great news and I'm happy to be a part of the former administration that started the ball rolling while you take the

baton and close the deal. I look forward to further announcements when that happens to help us protect our borders.

Moving on now to something that I know is very important to you, and to me, and I'm quite sure everybody, because we all got Cayman Brac connections in some capacity; there was an intention, and I think you campaigned on this, about back-of-house services jobs for Cayman Brackers. Have you met with the Deputy Governor (DG) about options available to consider for Cayman Brackers?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, through you.

I have not had a meeting with the Deputy Governor on that because it is the hope that those back-of-house jobs would be from the private sector to expand the economy in Cayman Brac. As you are aware, I would venture to say 90 per cent of the people in the Sister Islands are hired by the government. We need to expand our economy.

There were some government essential services jobs created. General Registry and Public Service Pensions were recently added. Those services are essential, not back-of-house. When we talk about back-of-house, trying to progress this with the private sector, is to get them to move some services to Cayman Brac and these meetings have been happening; those conversations are happening, have been happening, and we look forward to that continuing and we see some progress there.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Minister. Again through you, Mr. Chairman, I think you're on the right track to depend on the private sector and not always depend on the civil service, so smart approach; but I would dare to encourage you to say there is room for consideration of the civil service, because we're not increasing the number. What we're doing is transferring jobs that can be done in Cayman Brac.

You and I know all of our Cayman Brackers come here to work, but they don't want to leave Cayman Brac — if they could be in the service and still in Cayman Brac, they would, so I would encourage you to have that conversation with the DG because right now we actually do offer some services.

For example, I think NAU has some of its call service providers in the Brac. They deal with all the information you need over the phone or via email, and they don't live in Grand Cayman, so there's an opportunity there. If we want to provide economic opportunities for Cayman Brac, we have to start having the conversation. We can't campaign on it only; we need to start following through. Alright, moving on—

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, sorry. If I may. I totally agree with the member on that. It has never been my intent to "campaign on it only". We are definitely going to work towards making it a reality.

What I can say is that one of the initiatives that we are doing through CBC is to expand the COLS (Customs Online System) platform to the Sister Islands. This is back to the government but with it will come increased job opportunities; we want to move some of the approval process by officers to Cayman Brac, so we're adding officers and back office jobs through CBC to handle those approvals.

I thank the Minister for caring for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman just as much as I do.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and I thank the Minister for keeping on trying to put it into existence, but I'm not Minister anymore.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: I'm making the same mistake as my colleague, but I don't apologise.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Maybe it's not a mistake. Maybe the Lord is talking to you.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: With that being said, we move on to another concern.

You know that I brought a Motion to this Parliament just a few months back; unfortunately, I missed this question to the former Minister, so it goes to you, but the former Minister is here, so maybe he can add some components to it. A very sensitive Motion was brought to this House about a young man who was unable to go away to university on the basis that he had a criminal record for going over five miles an hour on his jet ski.

This honourable House voted unanimously to address the matter, yet up to this day I haven't heard a word, and guess what? That young man is not in university — he's at home doing nothing. A simple amendment. If you want an amendment for other Bills *unna* rush here quick-time, but a child's education is obviously not a priority.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Be nice. Okay. I'll be nice.

On the topic of rehabilitation, can the Honourable Minister say where the progress is in respect to this?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair and it's actually my pleasure to speak on rehabilitation on behalf of anyone because it's a subject that's very

important to me, and I can say that this Government shares that same importance. What I can share, through you, Mr. Chair, to the Member and all colleagues in this honourable Committee, is that just today Cabinet approved the drafting instructions to amend a suite of laws and regulations applicable to Port Authority and one of the components of it is to decriminalise the specific item in the regulation that criminalises speeding within 200 yards of the shoreline.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much for that update. It is a pleasure to hear it. Maybe the Minister should have put it in his opening speech. There would have been fewer questions, but in light of that— since you were reliably informed and I can't ask the Minister because he's no longer on the Floor for questions— can you say when that Bill will be presented to Parliament so I can have a timeline of approval?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I know the question is being posed directly to me. I thank the honourable Member for Cayman Brac West for answering the question about the CP [Cabinet Paper] being brought to Cabinet today for approval.

I want to assure the member that we are taking the drafting instructions very seriously and getting it done quickly by outsourcing it, because much of the drafting that we want to get through in the Port Authority Act has to do with the III Code (Instruments Implementation Code) Audit. I think it is due for us to pass it in the next 90 days, so we are working with the Attorney General's Chambers looking to outsource the legal drafting on that particular Act.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Minister Ebanks, I'll just move on by saying that— and I know the Honourable Premier is paying close attention to what I'm about to say.

Sometimes, minor changes get held up for overall reforms, and I do not think in this particular case, this should be held up. I'm not suggesting that it is, but I want to put a time stamp [on it]; 2.5 months ago I brought the Motion— and Minister, I am monitoring it, because every day that we are not willing to bring it to this House is another day the young man cannot leave the country to go off to university.

However, I trust you; you say you're putting your full attention [on it], but the next time I ask, I don't want to hear that we're waiting for all the other amendments when this one is a simple one. To remove that as a criminal component, which is a minor amendment, but while they are, *okay, that amendment is done, but we're still having to function on all the other amendments which will take up time* and that happens way too often, so I ask: Can you give a timeline for when that will come?

Hon. Johany S. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I cannot give the Member a direct timeline on when it will come. What I can say is that we're expediting it as quickly as possible to make sure the whole Act is being redone.

As I told you before, we are trying to make this 90-day with the III Code Audit, but I will speak to the Attorney General Chambers to see if that's something that we can pull out; maybe get that section done a little quicker and make the changes and then I'll be able to report back to this honourable House or give it to you in writing once I speak to him.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, member. I am going to move on now, Mr. Chairman, to my last two areas.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Very quickly—.

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Honourable Member for George Town Central, I only wanted to mention that I'm not so sure how the decriminalisation of the water sports zone is going to help this young man, as the charge has already been laid.

I am wondering, Mr. Chair — sorry, sorry, member; why hasn't he gone to the [Expungement] Board. I mean, I think this is something that could have been...

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: It can't be expunged?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No, and—

Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour: Five years. Yeah, because I actually brought the Second Chance Motion [in] 2011, I think it was, because of the same problem, but anyhow... Just a thought there.

The Chairman: Thanks for the interjection, Member for Bodden Town East. I recognise the Premier who wants to speak on this for a few seconds.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to assure the Member for George Town Central that, in this case, there is an inherent timeline for the III Code that the Minister is up against, so it is fortunate in this case, that the pressure is being brought to bear to make this international standard that he can sweep up this amendment.

If for some reason, as the Minister has said, it stalls, we can pull out the simple amendment, but I'm relatively confident that, because we need to keep MACI in particular, the Maritime Authority, in line with

international standards, this will have a rapid turnaround time.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Through you, Mr. Chairman, thank you so much for that, Premier.

I'm quite sure you guys have thought about it, but I think that you have to recognise that within the drafting instruction it has to be retroactive, because if it's not retroactive this person will not benefit from it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Right, because it would only be for those persons moving forward; so for drafters who are listening, [please] bear that in mind. Okay. Moving on.

[Inaudible interjection]

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

Through you, Mr. Chair. Minister, DAD 16 which has to do with tourism and business development in Cayman Brac, which is awesome and amazing.

Can you tell me what collaborations thus far, as a way of tourism strategic approach for Cayman Brac, because unfortunately, I saw very little— and I want to say this again: *very little* in your Strategic Policy Statement about tourism. We'll be speaking about that when I speak to my good friend, the Honourable Deputy Premier. Go ahead.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you, to the member.

This output is mostly as it relates to the activities of the marketing and promotions unit of the Department of District Administration. Historically, and today, what we focus on is promoting eco-tourism in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman in partnership with the Sister Islands' Tourism Association and I guess this would be outside of (Department of Tourism) DOT's work, so in tandem with DOT.

It is mostly for different programming in comparison to DOT; it is targeted, it is small in number, and it provides boutique services that aren't necessarily provided through the private sector yet in Cayman Brac or Little Cayman in the tourism sense. It also ensures that all the nature products that we try to do for eco-tourism in the Sister Islands are maintained — all the pathways through the historical trails on the Bluff, the national parks, the caves, the stairways going to the caves, all of those are maintained through this line item.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Just to wrap up this area: Have

your Ministry and the Deputy Premier's Ministry met about this line item yet?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have had meetings; the Chief Officers have had discussions —

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: About this particular line item?

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Whether this line item was discussed I cannot say.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman, the last question for me, and I want to say this for the record. I am really happy about the passion that I see this Minister delivering in respect to rehabilitation. Many may know my story and rehabilitation is a big component of that; you know, you make mistakes in life you got to have a system there for you to recover so that society doesn't throw you out with the bath water.

There is something that has been nagging many people in our community for some time, particularly persons who have been in prison or re-offenders: the difficulty of transitioning from prison back into society from a support system perspective. Can you tell me if there's anything you have identified that needs to be changed in respect to that transition — failures that we continue to have; and if you have found any, what are you doing to propose to change that?

I'll give you the main example: you come out of prison and got nowhere to go — ain't nobody there, no place to sleep. Lucky if you had any work while in prison that they would give you some money when you leave. If you were not a worker [and] you're leaving empty-handed, there is a high, high probability you're going to commit a crime again not necessarily because you want to, but because you need to live, you need to survive, you need to eat, you need to sleep — all of these things.

An opportunity for you to talk about the policy perspective of it.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, what I can say is that this Ministry has done a tremendous amount of work in supporting persons through their rehabilitation efforts since before I was there, and more so now. As I said in my contribution, we are moving from maintenance to momentum. The Ministry proudly supports The Bridge Foundation, a sort of transition programme most of whose clients

come out of prison. It provides them with housing, employment, and so on — those resources they need immediately out of prison.

When I assumed office, we had a prison officer seconded to the Ministry working on policy. In particular, allowing a better framework and access to opening bank accounts because to this day, you still hear complaints whereby banks are turning away Caymanians from opening bank accounts because of their criminal history; then they can't get a job because they don't have a bank account. Through the Bankers Association, our Ministry has worked with the majority of the local banks in creating a framework, a policy, ensuring that bank accounts can be opened for these persons. We have specific contact details for persons who are there, specific letters to be written in support of the bank accounts, so we are making progress in ensuring that persons who want to do better can do better, and are provided with the help to do so.

A few months ago you and I had a meeting as it pertains to expungement and the barriers to rehabilitation through the expungement process and I want to say that although we may not serve in the same government, it was great to know the passion is shared in that sense. Through that discussion, Caucus [and] Cabinet supported the removal of the \$25 application fee for expungement because we believed it was an unnecessary barrier. When you look at what a person has to go through to apply to have their record expunged — go to the post office, make the payment, get the receipt, submit the receipt with the application and wait and wait... It cut out three steps by removing that one fee, and what did the government lose by removing that barrier? One thousand dollars in revenue. That was it; but a tremendous barrier was eliminated because we believe in providing resources for people who want to better their lives to make a valuable contribution to society.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: That, Mr. Chairman, is an example of working together, and I am glad that the public has just seen an example that members in the Opposition can still help their lives by working with Ministers like yourself, who are willing to sit and talk because it ultimately affected that change by your Cabinet. Thank you so much.

Last thing for me, which is a very big thing, though you probably don't have an answer.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes, there are going to be plenty of those.

We voted on the referendum for the decriminalisation of possession of marijuana in small quantities without a definition [of such]. The Honourable Premier gave some updates I think about four months ago when

I asked him what the plan was. I think there was intention for the people who are going to review the legislation and give...

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: The Law Reform Commission — thank you so much.

Any update on that? That's all I really want to know. [Are they] any closer to it? I know many people are interested in it because it is a hurdle and a barrier to the rehabilitation process as well.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair through you, as much as I would love to provide the member with an answer, because I'm quite eager to see the results of that as well, I will leave it for when the Portfolio of Legal Affairs comes before Finance Committee.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman through you to the Honourable Minister. I remember that quite a while back when they were setting up the Cadet Corps, they basically saw it as one of the feeder organisations to the uniformed scale. I can't help but notice that in the last HR report published by the Portfolio of the Civil Service, the prison service is one of the few government departments where the ratio of Caymanians versus non-Caymanians is actually quite high.

While I recognise that the hiring of civil servants is under section 55 of the Constitution, I would be curious to know whether there are any initiatives that the government is looking to take to increase the number of Caymanians who would be employed within the prison service.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chair through you. As the member rightly stated, that would be a section 55 area but what I can say, having been reliably informed, is that the Ministry and His Majesty's Prison Service have been promoting the targeted recruitment of Caymanians into the prison service but, historically, it has always been an issue to attract Caymanians into that field because you'll always know somebody in prison. I went to a graduation at the prison where over 100 prisoners were receiving certifications and I saw people there who I grew up with, went to school with, I lived down the street from; if you're charged with guarding them and keeping them in their place, it may be difficult.

Many individuals may find it difficult, but efforts are being made to get those Caymanians who feel the calling to do so into that field because working for the

prison service isn't just guarding; again, going back to rehabilitation. It's providing the resources to allow a person to rehabilitate.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much for that, Minister.

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. Something I have always been concerned with about the prison, the prison being another area which is very near and dear to me because I offered to go and tutor there when I came back from university, to help out — plus it is in my constituency.

I am curious in terms of the costs that the government incurs, especially with regard to medical care for non-Caymanian prisoners, who in some cases are non-violent offenders from what I understand; yet the medical cost for some is actually quite high. Is there a policy we are looking at, whereby non-Caymanian people [who] are expensive to maintain due to being sick and requiring serious medical assistance — maybe, commuting their sentence and sending them home a bit early?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair through you, as it stands right now, we have a duty to follow the court orders.

I agree with you and share the same concern with all the expenses incurred for foreign nationals we have to incarcerate. It is a policy initiative that could be looked at and explored for the future, but of course, it would have to be done in collaboration and led by the judicial administration and Portfolio of Legal Affairs and the Director of Public Prosecutions' (DPP's) office, not necessarily this Ministry [though] we would be the beneficiaries with fewer expenses through the prison.

I'm sure those entities are listening; perhaps they will put that on their agenda.

The Chairman: The Member continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Honourable Minister for that response.

I must say to the Honourable Minister that he has a very good team working for him. I know the Chief Officer is a very, very, very capable guy, plus he has good heads of department and Deputy Chief Officers along with him.

Something I am pleased to hear is changing up the prison in the sense of trying to build a new prison. When you look at the same HR report, at the number of prison officers above the age of 50, which is a good percentage, and consider how the prison is designed compared to international standards, when we look at the ratio, I think we are running almost 2 to 1 or 1 to 1 in terms of the number of admin and prison staff compared to prisoners, whereas from what I understand,

the ratio in the UK and elsewhere, is like 10 or 12 to 1. From that standpoint, the prison by design is very inefficient and it requires way more personnel to manage than would be required by a standard prison. If you look at the number of egress points or places where people can escape and so forth.

I'm very happy to see this is being addressed, and I think by the time many of those other prison officers above the age of 50 go to retire the prison should be pretty much completed and we should be able to have a much smaller staff complement at the prison, which in the long term would be better to save the country money.

With that said, I want to thank the Minister and also thank his team for the job they are doing. That's pretty much it.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, member.

Since there are no further questions, I propose to take the appropriations to the Honourable Minister responsible for District Administration and Home Affairs in block.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members would approve:

BLOCK VOTE:

**DAH 1, DAH 2, DAH 3, DAH 4, DAH 5, DAH 6,
DAH 7, DAH 8, DAH 9, SIH 1, NGS 38
TP 46, TP 66, TP 69, TP 86, TP 101
OE 115, OE 144, EI 93
EA 55, EA 60, EA 125, EA 144, EA 171**

Appropriation Reference Number	Financial Year 2026 \$	Financial Year 2027 \$
DAH 1	6,848,895	6,814,268
DAH 2	13,449,455	13,779,234
DAH 3	5,327,955	5,436,133
DAH 4	27,350,998	27,975,949
DAH 5	19,979,476	20,969,839
DAH 6	6,598,445	7,097,555
DAH 7	26,020,040	26,340,779
DAH 8	4,974,414	5,032,256
DAH 9	1,468,952	1,704,950
SIH 1	569,263	570,116
NGS 38	1,741,000	1,741,000
Transfer Payments		
TP 46	130,000	130,000
TP 66	600,000	600,000
TP 69	155,000	155,000
TP 86	600,000	600,000
TP 101	160,000	160,000

Other Executive Expenses		
OE 115	86,000	86,000
OE 144	2,024,000	2,177,000
Equity Investment		
EI 93	13,171,532	12,513,700
Executive Assets		
EA 55	500,000	1,500,000
EA 60	250,000	200,000
EA 125	150,000	100,000
EA 144	50,000	150,000
EA 171	729,000	755,000

Honourable members, I move that the aforementioned output groups be approved on the Schedule to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: All Appropriations to the Minister of District Administration and Home Affairs passed.

The Chairman: I invite the Honourable Minister responsible for District Administration and Home Affairs to offer closing remarks to the Finance Committee.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Mr. Chair, thank you very much.

First, let me thank you and all honourable members in the House for the support and for the care in which questions were asked and the interest shown through the questions in the work that we're doing through this Ministry.

Secondly, and lastly, Mr. Chair, let me thank the awesome members of my team who have been here for the last seven hours who even had to run out, or leave the office and come and get food for them and steal snacks and distribute all over the place. My sincere thanks to all of them, the Chief Officer, the Deputy Chief Officers, the Chief Financial Officer, the Strategic Advisor, all the HODs (Heads of Department) and their finance managers, the heads and finance managers of SAGCs.

Mr. Speaker, it wasn't only me who prepared for this Finance Committee session. It was them; they are the ones who I say worked from sun up till sundown every single day but more importantly today, to defend every dollar that has been requested in this budget. Without them, it would not have been possible, so I sincerely thank them, and I look forward to all the work we

will be doing together for the people of the Cayman Islands over the next two years.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, thank you and thank all of your team for coming and providing the very comprehensive answers to the Committee. It certainly has been a privilege to have sat through the first day of Finance Committee under a full budget. I thank all members for all the questions asked. I know that sometimes we get a little impassioned; it just goes with the territory. We are human, and we are but humble servants of the people.

At this juncture, I close this meeting of Finance Committee to reconvene at 10am tomorrow, Friday, 14th November, 2025.

At 9pm the Committee suspended until 10am Friday, 14th November, 2025.