



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 Monday, 17th November 2025, at 10:42 a.m. 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. Johany S. Ebanks, JP, MP
Hon. Isaac D. Rankine, JP, MP
Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, JP, MP
Hon. Michael S. Myles, MP
Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP
Ms. Heather D. Bodden, OCl, Cert. Hon., JP, MP
Mrs. Julie J.T. Hunter, JP, MP
Hon. Joseph X. Hew, MP
Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, JP, MP
Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, MP
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP
Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP
Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Cert. Hon., MP
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP
- In attendance:** Mr. Kenneth Jefferson, Financial Secretary & Chief Officer, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
Ms. Anne Owens, Senior Assistant Financial Secretary, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
Mr. Matthew Tibbetts, Accountant General, Ministry of Finance & Economic Development
- Apologies:** Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour, CCl, JP, MP
- Witnesses:** Hon. Samuel Bulgin, Attorney General, Portfolio of Legal Affairs
Ms. Nyasha Reid, Senior Manager, Children and Youth Services Foundation
- Procedural Clerk:** Mrs. Twila Escalante
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[Hon. Rolston M. Anglin, Chairman, presiding]

The Chairman: Honourable members, we are recommending Finance Committee to consider the Appropriation (Financial Years 2026 and 2027) Bill, 2025, and continue taking witnesses for the Bill, but before starting, I would call on the Honourable Premier to open us in prayer.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks, Minister for Financial Services & Commerce, Elected Member for West Bay South: Good morning and thank you, Mr. Chair. Colleagues, let us bow our heads and open our hearts.

We pray dear Lord as we start this working week that you guide us to continue to deliberate in this honourable House under the auspice of Finance Committee to review with prudence, collaboration and intelligence all for the betterment of this country that we hold dear. We ask dear Lord that we send thoughts and prayers to those who have lost members of their family in recent days. In this case, this morning, we acknowledge the loss of Ms. Frieda Blake from West Bay. One of her daughters is on the Financial Secretary's staff in Treasury, Ms. Asenath Blake. We pray dear Lord over the family, we extend sincere sympathies and that reminds us dear Lord that life is precious and we must look after each other.

In that spirit, let us colleagues say the Lord's Prayer:

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

The Chairman: Please be seated.

Colleagues, I hope that you and your families had a restful and productive weekend. As we were on Friday, having not dealt with two of the items on the agenda that we had distributed to all honourable members, we will lead off with the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce. The Honourable Premier has distributed a statement and a working document by appropriation group with detailed information for the benefit of members. At this point, I would call on the Honourable Premier to open us with a short statement to outline the outputs that we will be considering in this Ministry.

STATEMENT ON APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND COMMERCE

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair and through you. Per the arrangements that we have agreed with the Opposition, each Minister will give a short opening statement of the overarching vision over the next two years and I have advised each of the Ministers that follow behind me to do the same with each of their Ministries. Also, as you indicated, before members is a table that outlines each appropriation with details, including a row that sets out the variance between 2025 and 2026/2027.

With that Mr. Chair, I will read [my] opening statement which should now be in the hands of all members. The Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce (MFSC) remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and enabling the Cayman Islands being **"a globally recognised international financial services centre of excellence."**

This statement is not just about maintaining and continuing to bolster our reputation on the world stage; it is about ensuring that our economy remains strong and resilient for the benefit of every Caymanian, directly or indirectly.

Thus it is worth pausing to recognise just how central financial services are to our economic and fiscal stability.

The financial services industry is the single largest contributor to our national income and one of the most important sources of stable government revenue. It helps to pay for our schools, healthcare, polic-

ing, social programmes, roads and other critical infrastructure. When the global environment becomes more uncertain, the strength of this sector is one of the reasons Cayman has been able to avoid the more severe fiscal pressures seen elsewhere.

The sector's impact is not confined to balance sheets. Financial services directly and indirectly support thousands of jobs across the Islands, and they are a major driver of high-skill, high-wage employment for Caymanians. The industry is also one of the largest employers of women and a significant source of professional opportunities for young Caymanians returning from study overseas.

The effects ripple across the domestic economy. Financial services activities sustain demand for legal, accounting, technology, compliance, marketing, IT, human resources and hospitality services. Our status as a leading international financial centre supports a broad ecosystem of professional services, and that ecosystem, in turn, supports local entrepreneurship as well as medium to small businesses.

In short, when financial services are strong and well-regulated, the whole country benefits. Protecting and modernising this sector is not a niche concern of industry; it is a core public-interest priority.

The 2026–2027 budget for the Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce is designed to strengthen our position and to address the risks ahead.

First, through our core policy and legislative units, we will continue to strengthen the regulatory framework for financial services, commerce, aviation and maritime affairs, and intellectual property. This includes work on beneficial ownership transparency, tax cooperation, and alignment with international standards on anti-money laundering, counter-terrorist financing and proliferation financing. The objective is clear: to keep Cayman off adverse lists, to minimise the risk of sanctions or market access restrictions, and to preserve our reputation as a high-quality, compliant financial centre.

Second, we are investing in data, technology, and business process modernisation across the Ministry. These investments will support the transition to outcomes-based budgeting by improving our ability to track performance, monitor risk, and report meaningfully to Parliament and the public. These investments and innovations will also make it easier for businesses and individuals to interact with our agencies, reducing delays and improving service quality.

Third, this budget continues and expands support for small and medium-sized enterprises, entrepreneurial development and export readiness. Through agencies such as the Cayman Islands Centre for Business Development, we will help local businesses access advisory services, training, and programmes that support innovation and growth. This is an essential complement to our international financial services

work: a strong offshore sector must sit alongside a vibrant domestic economy that offers real opportunities for Caymanians.

Fourth, we will deepen our work on illicit finance and financial crime risk. The new Office for Strategic Action on Illicit Finance (OSAIF) will continue to coordinate national efforts in preparation for the next round of FATF [Financial Action Task Force] assessments, and to assist in building capacity across supervisory and law-enforcement partners.

Housed within the Ministry, OSAIF consolidates the country's strategic leadership, interagency coordination, and operational delivery in anti-money laundering, counter-terrorist financing, and counter-proliferation financing under one roof.

This is not only about satisfying international examiners; it is about protecting Cayman's economy and society from the real harms associated with illicit finance.

To focus briefly on preparation for the FATF 5th Round:

- 1) OSAIF is conducting a gap analysis on our current position against each FATF Standard, and it is working with each agency or authority where they are doing their own gap analysis.
- 2) From the gap analysis, OSAIF will develop and track progress on action plans to meet the relevant Standard where there is a gap.
- 3) OSAIF is working on technical requirements to update legislation where necessary – including revisions to the AML (Anti-money laundering) regulations.
- 4) OSAIF is also coordinating training across agencies, the private sector, and monitoring reports and mutual evaluation reports (MERs) coming out of other countries.

Finally, through our overseas offices and stakeholder engagement programmes, we will maintain an active external presence. This is particularly important in an era where international tax, trade and regulatory policies are evolving rapidly. Proactive engagement helps to ensure that Cayman's interests are understood and considered, rather than decided for us in other capitals.

Broad Outcome 3 therefore drives the Government's efforts to build a diversified economy that supports prosperity and innovation across all sectors.

To be clear, the local financial services industry is comprised of several strong sectors, for example, funds, insurance, trusts and banking. Therefore, when we say "build a diversified" it is in the sense that among our core industries, we aim to expand the breadth of sectors to seize opportunities in emerging areas that are complementary—chiefly reinsurance, tech and family offices.

For instance, reinsurance provides a significant opportunity for the Cayman Islands. Due to our highly regulated framework and our strong standing as

an investment funds global leader, there is a convergence of insurance and asset management that the Cayman Islands is in prime position to develop a solid local reinsurance ecosystem that can create high-valued private and public sector jobs, boost the country's reputation, increase government revenue, motivate charitable contributions (such as towards scholarships), and local access to greater insurance expertise, which can assist with domestic challenges such as the cost of home insurance.

The Ministry will therefore lead a robust initiative to obtain Qualified Jurisdiction Status under the US-based National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC).

Taken together, the MFSC budget reflects a strategy to strengthen the foundations of the financial services industry, expand to newer complementary sectors, enhance access to financial services, and encourage innovation that supports local business growth and entrepreneurship.

This budget is about more than just numbers—it's about investing in the future of our people and businesses. By prioritising initiatives that improve service delivery, foster entrepreneurship, and ensure a stable business environment, we are taking concrete steps to support the economic well-being of every Caymanian. This budget serves as a roadmap for creating a stronger, more inclusive economy.

The shift towards Outcomes-Based Budgeting (OBB) is integral to this process. With OBB, we ensure that our investments are not only aligned with national priorities but also focused on achieving measurable impacts. This approach moves us beyond traditional budgeting and places a stronger emphasis on delivery of results with enhanced transparency, accountability, and value for money. It empowers us to directly link our financial resources to tangible improvements in services, infrastructure, and the opportunities available to our people. Through this, we are building a more responsive and responsible government that works for all stakeholders—public and private alike.

In moving forward with this budget, we are not just preparing for the next fiscal year; we are laying the groundwork for long-term, sustainable growth that benefits every individual, family, and business in the Cayman Islands.

A high-level overview of each appropriation for the Ministry shall be distributed, and has been distributed, to members which includes an explanatory note for various budget variances between 2025 and 2026/2027.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

I recognise the Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Elected Member for George Town Central:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I recognise that we are shying away a little bit from conventions in respect to the Finance Committee process with the offering of statements, but in alignment with the agreement amongst members, as the Premier said, allow me a short opportunity to give a few words to the current process of Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman, this Government has been sold to the public on a mandate of honesty and transparency. The Premier has previously and repeatedly stated that they want to be held accountable yet the commitment made to this House and to this country to hear full, detailed policy exposure from every Minister during the pivotal budget debate was strategically avoided. The Premier not only managed the clock, he allowed the premature shutdown of the budget debate itself. This is a clear manoeuvre to evade scrutiny and subvert the established parliamentary conventions of this Parliament.

The Chairman: Member, this is not a response to the Premier, this is a reopening of a debate in the House.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No sir.

The Chairman: There is no requirement for any member to debate during any debate. The budget debate was delivered by me and every other person then has the opportunity as to whether they contribute, and as you know, Ministers have many avenues to elucidate on [regarding] what their particular Ministries are going to do.

What we agreed was that you were going to give a quick reply to the statement made by the Premier. This is getting back to Parliament and what was discussed in Parliament. We're now in Committee.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, the details in this line item have to do with the budget debate so it is therefore unavoidable for the debate process on the budget to be mentioned.

Now, Mr. Chairman, as we discussed earlier, you are the authority to this Committee and I cannot challenge your ruling, but if I am not allowed as we agreed—

The Chairman: I simply want you to contribute your response to the Premier's vision for financial services.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, if [it is] more appropriate for me to then file the Motion of a debate under CBO 1, I'm happy to take that step, whereby the Standing Orders allow the privilege of each Member of this House to formally open and have an opportunity to respond. Now, I know we're in uncharted waters because we've already

started to go against convention due to the government's lack of detail on their portfolios, [which is] why we're having Ministers open with a statement now. Before the opening I discussed with you the opportunity to respond as to the concerns of that—I was reading and I was interrupted. If you're ruling as Chair for this Finance Committee against the standing principles of convention and Erskine May and our Standing Orders, I have no other way than to accept and then formally use the privileges awarded to me under the Standing Orders to file a debate under CBO 1.

I am at your mercy, Mr. Chairman, I would like to proceed. Thank you.

The Premier did not just manage the clock, he allowed the premature shutdown of the budget debate itself. This is a clear manoeuvre to evade scrutiny and subvert established parliamentary conventions. The failure runs deep, Mr. Chairman. The Government also strategically allowed each one of their Ministers to evade presenting the vision for their portfolios during the Strategic Policy Statement (SPS) debate, ensuring that the good people of this country would not hear the specifics of their plans. This, after waiting half a year to hear those plans, Mr. Chairman. It should be highlighted though that even when the Government amended the law for the timeframe for the SPS to be extended, the Government still did not give the full details.

Consequently, the country is left entirely in the dark with no clear understanding of the direction of the next fiscal cycle. Thus far, Mr. Chairman, if it wasn't for the detailed line of questioning in this Finance Committee by the Opposition, the country would not know most of what it knows now. Take Water Authority, for example — nowhere and at no time did the Minister or the Premier say that it intended to increase the cost of the most important thing to human life; water.

Mr. Chairman, the idea presented to this Parliament that the good people of this country should read a 1,500 page budget and strategic documents in order to know where the NCFC [National Coalition for Caymanians] Government will be taking this country is an outright insult. The members of this Government know full well that the citizens of this country are too busy trying to keep their heads above water than to go through such a painstaking exercise; and Mr. Chairman, even if they did, most members of the public will not have the technical know-how to translate or interpret what it means to the everyday outcomes in their lives.

Mr. Chairman, we in the Opposition are starting to understand the truth and the hidden motive behind this deceitful manoeuvre — the Government's apparent fear of transparency and secrecy regarding the implementation of a massive list of new and additional taxes and fees, much of which was not detailed before we came to Finance Committee, but merely outlined with little specifics. The purpose of shutting down the debate

was to hide the truth from the people because they were actively trying to persuade the public that these taxes would not directly affect them. The very little detail offered was designed to manage public perception, knowing full well that the complete disclosure would expose their deceit and lead to a disparaging Opposition rebuttal.

It's an absurd idea, Mr. Chairman that the list of taxes and fees that are only now being detailed in Finance Committee would not be passed on to the average consumer. That is blatantly untrue. It was only during the rigorous Finance Committee process, through persistent and strategic questioning by the Opposition that we are able to pull out the fact that the Government will be increasing the cost of living through the various new and increased fees across the country; and we have only examined three Ministers thus far.

Crucially, Mr. Chairman, these taxes and fees were not even calculated in the official economic and statistics outlined in the budget and the SPS forecast. What happened to the commitment of an evidence-driven approach or fiscal responsibility? The Government's own forecasts outlined a 2.3 per cent inflation rate, but by introducing these uncalculated fees they are knowingly acting in a way that will increase the national inflation rate and further escalate the already crushing cost of living for the people of the Cayman Islands. Can you imagine this, after saying that their number one big ticket item for the Government was lowering the cost of living? Really?

Well, Mr. Chairman, this Government's strategic deceit is magnified by its direct attack on the hardest working citizens. While they are actively pushing new taxes and fees that would inevitably spike inflation and increase the cost of living for everyone, they have simultaneously declared that there will be no cost of living for our dedicated civil servants. While we anticipate that the private sector may offer some adjustments — luckily, for them — the Government is failing their own workforce. They are manufacturing inflation with one hand and with the other, they are handing their employees a pay cut in real terms. This is not just poor planning, Mr. Chairman, it is a betrayal of the very public servants responsible for running the government that they hide behind.

Mr. Chairman, by shutting down the debate and withholding these details, the Premier ensured that the Ministers were never forced to publicly detail what they were going to do with the billions of dollars that were allocated to them and the painful, increased financial burdens being placed on our citizens to cover those budgets; but the reckless political games go deeper than just secrecy. These proposed taxes and fees are not just going to inflict pain, they are being relied upon to balance this entire budget and meet revenue projections for the next year and the year after.

Serious questions have been raised regarding the feasibility and legality of some of these large reve-

nue measures. Given the Government is already projecting such a small margin of surplus in 2026 and 2027, what happens if they cannot legally implement some of these specific taxes and fees? The Premier's silence leaves us facing a very real possibility of a potential deficit, and if this deficit occurs, my next question answers itself: Will this Government's only solution be to inflict more taxes on the people of this country?

The Premier's actions are totally opposite from the honesty and transparency he promised that we would see from his Government.

Mr. Chairman, I asked the Premier directly: Why did you tell the country that your Ministers would explain in full detail what they are doing and then deliberately ensure that they never got a chance to do so? Since the Premier has full authority over his Cabinet, his failure to deliver on this promise gives a stark indication to this House and to the country; either he is complicit in the secrecy or he has lost the power to control his own Cabinet Ministers.

Either way, Mr. Chair, it's quite concerning. The Premier must explain to this honourable House why the country has been denied clear explanations of what they will be doing with the people's \$2.5 billion budget. This is not a political game. This statement is an act of holding them accountable Mr. Chair, exactly what the Premier claimed he wanted.

The Premier committed to “a ‘**Deliver or Explain**’ framework...” Well, you and most of your Ministers never delivered the details and now it's time for you to explain; explain the deception; explain this betrayal of trust; and finally respond to the challenge and provide the accountability that the people are asking for, deserve and that you promised.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, to add those remarks. I don't think I'll have to respond to any other statements moving forward but it had to be said.

The Chairman: Members, before I open the specific output groups of the Ministry for Financial Services, I think we ought to remember that in a debate any and everything can be said with much bluster and blunder—and I do mean blunder, not thunder. For the listening public and perhaps for some members, our system is designed that the scrutiny of this entire budget happens in Finance Committee; it does not happen in a budget debate, for any and everything can be said in a debate. It is just during this process that we go output group by output group, so that members ask the specific questions and it is done publicly so that the public gets the explanation of its budget.

We're at this stage and no member under my chairmanship has had any right curtailed. In fact, some may say I have been a little too lenient with the length of time that some of the budgets have been scrutinised. However, I would rather that scrutiny than to say that I shut any members down. We are now in the midst of Finance Committee and this is the opportunity for all

members to be able to elucidate to the public, via this Committee, precisely what is being approved because this is the people's budget. Thus, Ministers are able to ensure that the public at this point understands what we are questioning versus the public trying to recall what was said last week during, often, a 90 to 120-minute debate, which, in my opinion, offered little to no assistance to the public. I dare say, the way I left this Parliament 12 years ago where Ministers opened every time and gave a short presentation to their ministries is the better way, however, history will have to test us.

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND COMMERCE

FSC 20 - Framework for the Functioning of the Financial Services Industry

The Chairman: I now ask, are there any questions on FSC 20 - Framework for the Functioning of the Financial Services Industry; \$9,398,399 for 2026 and \$10,181,302 for 2027?

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Chairman, I wonder if this would be the right line item to ask the Premier to provide us with an update on the overseas offices.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Not specifically, but I'll take the question now.

The overseas offices continue. We have a major presence in Singapore which covers Asia; so it's located in Singapore, but it covers Asia. Brussels is covered from the London office, as the representative to the EU works out of the London office and transfers back and forth, which offers us a cost saving in addition to having both locations covered because the London office is always there. In terms of the United States office, we do have a presence there. A rep is still to be hired, but we have constant engagement with the US via either myself on trips or through stakeholder engagement through Cayman Finance.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

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

Are the Brussels, London and [Singapore] offices fully staffed?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

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

Can the Honourable Minister give us an overview of what consultation was done with the financial services industries with the new proposed increase in fees?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It depends on which fee because there are different multiple groups within financial services. For example, take the increase in Class A bank licence fees that was done via CIBA, the [Cayman Islands] Bankers' Association; so it depends on which fee, because there are different sub-sectors.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Through you, Mr. Chairman. I want to know if you consulted with all the sectors within the fee structure that would fall in your remit, whether it be banking, financial services, lawyers, accountants. I am trying to confirm that the industry is fully aware and accepting of these fees or has there been any concerns. They could have concerns and say *no, we don't like it*, but if the Government is just saying they have heard that, but we're still pushing forward... I'm trying to understand how we got to the place of agreement with this.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. I understand the question now. In an overall sense, there has been consultation on the fees. Some consultations are still ongoing; for example, the accountants in terms of the brackets to make sure that they're set right and you're motivating the right behaviours. Overall, each of the subsectors has had consultation. What often then occurs is once it goes industry-wide, meaning everybody outside of associations because not everybody's on each association's council, you may get additional feedback; but overall there has been consultation.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

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

Minister, do you have any concerns that there may be negative effects from the increase in these fees on the industry in any way?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I don't have overall concerns, particularly because, as I said, for a few categories we are still ironing a few things out. I'm relatively confident that we will get to a position where:

1. There will be fees that will be palatable to the industry; and
2. [Those fees] would not be passed on to the consumer.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Last follow up in this area.

If you find a situation where, after your completed consultation period with the relevant stakeholders, they are not happy or feel that there may be a negative impact if you do increase the fees, what would that mean then to the budget forecasting? Obviously these listed fees are being used to balance the budget projections. Have you given any thought to that?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I always give thought to that and as I said before, I'm relatively confident it will be fine but there are also a couple of other measures that I have in mind that I'm also exploring in the event that there needs to be an additional amount to cover a gap.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Can you give a list of those other measures that you have in mind?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: As we have been transparent, they go back to the area of banking that we discussed in this honourable House in terms of our rate of foreign exchange. There are other things that have not been tested which I'm still going to continue to work on even if this balances to try to improve the situation in 2026 and 2027.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Is the foreign exchange the only area of consideration?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, there are others. We spoke about reinsurance, so if we continue to march down that road, the Class Bs are the captive insurance, the Class Ds, and a particularly new class could come online in 2026, so there are other areas.

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

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay, Mr. Roy Tatum,

Mr. A. Roy Tatum, Elected Member for Red Bay: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one comment and then a question, Mr. Chair.

It seems to me that there are a number of areas where there are question marks around revenue measures, so I'm really hoping by the end of Finance Committee we're a bit more certain about some of these.

My question is going back to the overseas offices. The Premier might recall a number of years ago

when overseas offices, especially in Europe, were being discussed, the financial services and business sectors that were involved in a meeting — I do believe he was there as well. The strong feeling and thinking was that we need to have a presence on the ground in Brussels, so I'm just wondering how satisfied we are that this arrangement is actually working? Would we not be better off doing what other territories have done, where they have an office in London but they also have someone on the ground in Brussels to maintain the relationship on a daily basis and to build those strong ties? I'm looking to see what your thoughts are about actually moving to the point where we have someone on the ground and how [well] the arrangement is working now.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. Through you Mr. Chair. Good question. From our perspective, the arrangement is working just fine. Since post Brexit, the UK is no longer part of the EU [European Union] that makes arrangements to create an office more difficult and expensive. In addition to that, we have found that it's not wholly necessary. The primary business stakeholders are actually in London. That's where you get the concerns and the questions about the future. The rep can then travel easily on a two hour train ride to Brussels to meet with any stakeholders in the event there are any pertinent questions.

However, in my experience, what matters most to the individual high-level stakeholders in the EU is that they see the Minister, not a representative. They know that the representative is only carrying out instructions as a civil servant. This is why you will see me sometimes get criticised for traveling, but what matters most to those stakeholders is that they sit in front of the policymaker to understand the direction of travel — from that standpoint, I'm very comfortable.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Premier, you will never hear a complaint from me about your traveling, sir. I well know and understand the importance of that. I do well recall a prominent individual within the EU saying to a team lead by then Alden McLaughlin, how happy he was to see the Premier of the Cayman Islands actually coming to speak with them, so I know the importance of that. I also recall what I heard at the time about the importance of being on the ground, not just for relationships with the business stakeholders, but with the movers and shakers and the powers within the European Union itself — creating those relationships and helping them better understand what the Cayman Islands is about, which is the reason why Bermuda has an office there and I do believe the BVI [British Virgin Islands] as well.

I will leave it at that sir, because I do believe we're missing an opportunity and we need to make sure we're not being penny wise and pound foolish. Thank you very much sir.

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I am confident we are not missing anything.

Each of those other overseas offices that are in those other countries, we all talk. With communication these days of Zoom calls and WhatsApp, they can exchange information. The rep's job is to soften the ground of the principal that is coming, so the rep does not have to be there every day. As long as the rep is making contact at a bureaucratic level, not really seeing the principal because as I said previously, the other principal is looking to see me, so once the ground is softened and the introductions are there and it's lined up for my trip or a Chief Officer's trip, we are absolutely fine.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: One final question on that, sir. Is there a dedicated rep for Europe in the London office; and if so, who is that person? In other words, [someone] whose focus is Europe.

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: That is Ms. Julie Campbell who's in post now and we'll be seeing her next week, provided we get through Finance Committee.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a procedural matter. What is your structured way of dealing with the appropriations today? I do have some questions that fall a little further down the appropriation list.

The Chairman: We will take the votes now and we'll proceed to that point.

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

The Chairman: Since there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve FSC 20 - Framework for the Functioning of the Financial Services Industry in the amounts of \$9,398,399 in 2026 and \$10,181,302 in 2027, and that those items on the Schedule form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 20 passed.

FSC 22 - Registers of Corporate and Vital Information

The Chairman: FSC 22 - Registers of Corporate and Vital Information. If there are no questions—

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

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Company registry, yeah? A couple of questions on the company registry. I've been getting some feedback about the General Registry — it's been very difficult at times to get anyone to answer the phone and no one responds to the CBP [Cayman business portal] help desk email either. We're getting complaints that self-managing incorporations can take over two weeks because of the response time.

I guess the first question would be: Does the company registry have a target completion time they use as a guide?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes. Typically it's 3 to 5 business days on an ordinary basis, and if sent on an express basis then it would be one business day, but you pay extra.

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

The Chairman: Honourable Member, continuing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chairman to the Honourable Minister. Have you recently received any updates on whether they're achieving these targets, or what their average response time is?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, and that's part of the reason why we're investing in systems. The existing system, I think, has reached near its end of life and we need to update the system because it's not working as efficiently as it should be.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you Mr. Chairman to the Minister. That's good news. Can the Minister say how many or

whether or not there is enough dedicated resources working on the applications sent via the portal?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think we are [also] trying to increase the staff complement slightly to give additional hands on deck; so it's part systems, part personnel.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Thank you for that. I think we're going down the right road. It seems as if we recognise these issues.

Last question on that is that the CBP portal does not allow for section 80 companies or companies limited by guarantees to be processed, it forces the user to create shareholders, which is not a feature of the section 80 company. Section 80 incorporations have to be submitted manually and that process can take several weeks. Has that been identified and being dealt with?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: That's one of the areas of improvement, for sure.

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

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Premier say whether or not the new implementation of the company fees will be mandatory for January? As you know, many of the companies would already have done their registration and calculations within the financial services reporting and if they have to now adjust to the new fees that are being proposed, that's a whole lot of work for the industry to do all over again. Has that been considered and what's the reality, so the sector can know?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, through you Mr. Chair. The company registration fee is increasing in 2027 for that reason, because it's a lot of work. It is tempting because it does yield quite a bit even when you go up by just \$100, but we recognise the burden, which I think occurred last year, of having to re-invoice four company fees late in the year. For that reason, those will feature in 2027 so they have longer notice of it, because it features now as part of 2027 revenue.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much. I think that is a very smart approach, Premier. Just confirming that that is

what is registered in the timeline for the revenue allocation.

The Chairman: Yes, it is.

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

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay, Mr. Roy Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just returning to the improvements that were mentioned a few minutes ago. I have friends whenever I see them, I hear similar complaints as the Leader of the Opposition was mentioning. Through you, to the Premier: is there a timeline for these improvements, in terms of system improvements and hiring more people to make sure that the level of service is where it needs to be?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, through you Mr. Chair. Assuming that the budget passes, that's the first part of the timeline—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: We get through here, then yes, the timeline would be to try to commit to complete majority of the technological systems. In a nutshell, to not try to overcomplicate it, the existing IT system that is being used has been in place for a very long time and it's now time to upgrade it. That means that the IT professionals have to match the changes in the law and pattern them and code them, so that process is likely to take a few months before it really takes hold. Once that system upgrade is in place, then we're relatively confident that this will move forward. The rest is just hiring the staff.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chair, are we talking by the end of the third quarter next year; by June/July next year; what sort of timeframe do you have in your head?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'm hoping for Q2 or Q3.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Are there any further questions? *[Pause]* As there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as FSC 22 - Registers of Corporate and Vital Information in the amounts of \$6,246,773 in 2026 and \$7,001,191 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 22 passed.

FSC 23 - International Cooperation in Tax Matters

The Chairman: FSC 23 - International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman to the Honourable Minister. I think there's only question I have to ask here, is there any end in sight for this? We see this continue to rise every year — \$1 million, \$2 million, \$2.5 million. I think it would be good if the Honourable Minister could give us an update and perhaps provide some insight on these increases.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I would love to be able to tell the Leader of the Opposition, through you, Mr. Chair, that there is an end in sight, not just for Cayman but for the entire world, but I don't think so. The continued work of the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] and the Global Forum will advance. They're looking at every aspect of financial services transactions around the world.

In this particular case for the budget year of 2026 and 2027, you will see an increase here because one of the items that the Department of International Tax Cooperation needs is staff. We recognised that in pre assessments when we are stacked against other international financial centres, proportionately we have far less staff, but a far greater degree of registered entities. They need a combination of staff near more comparable to the amount of entities, which is a good thing for the Cayman Islands that those are here, and also a system upgrade for the work that's here.

As we can see and look at the Global Forum and the OECD's work, tax transparency initiatives will only continue to roll on. It's clear in any G20 statement that you read, that this global work continues. In order for us to keep pace as much as possible and stay away from any adverse list, we have to ensure that we have comparable amount of staff to handle the work and up-to-date systems.

The Chairman: Are there any further questions on FSC 23? As there are no further questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3) I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item de-

scribed on the Schedule as FSC 23 - International Cooperation in Tax Matters in the amounts of \$6,097,213 in 2026 and \$6,485,502 in 2027, to form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 23 passed.

FSC 36 - Trade and Commerce Licensing and Supervision

The Chairman: FSC 36 - Trade and Commerce Licensing and Supervision.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister. Once again, I won't rehash all of the things I said about General Registry regarding the responses and emails and telephone calls. I'm getting feedback that the same is happening with DCI [Department of Commerce & Investment] and, as you know, we worked tirelessly to reduce the bureaucracy and the red tape with DCI.

Quite often you will find that it is other agencies that request this implementation of further steps to make their job easier; and the argument is, no, you should do your job, each one of you have a seat on the board. We went through the legislative changes that allow the passing of information, but specifically, it is my understanding that they recently introduced a requirement for companies to submit a register of shareholders stamped by the company registrar. We just talked about the challenges that they have, understanding that the Companies Act does not actually require the registry stamp [for] register of shareholders and the added layers of bureaucracy, response times and the additional pressure that it puts on the registrar and the fact that that they will not accept a register that was certified by the registered office despite the fact that the registered office is licensed by CIMA [Cayman Islands Monetary Authority] and is subject to audits and very high standards. Are you aware of the situation?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair, through you. Excellent question. Yes, that observation came to me as well. More importantly, it came to the board's attention and has now been rectified that a certified copy, what was the prior practice, is absolutely acceptable. That situation should be rectified shortly.

More broadly, that's just one example of what you are conveying. There's a bigger piece of work in 2026 and 2027 which is within the budget — for lack of a better word — to revamp the system. There's bits of legislation that, for historical reasons, have been scattered: Music and Dancing (Control) Act, Liquor Licensing [Act] and Trade and Business Licensing (TBL) [Act], we want to reframe all of it and have a more comprehensive commerce piece of work. I've talked about this before on the radio, but this is just one instance where, again, the bureaucracy of longstanding businesses whose shareholdings never change, having to go every year for a TBL.

The final piece of the puzzle for the multi-year licenses is once we finalise the brackets for the accountants, that's the final fee. Then we can add it within the policy that you can just apply for a five-year licence. Then it will be incumbent upon you, the business holder, where if there's a change in your shareholding— pick a multifamily business that we know well, Kirk's, Foster's — then you'd have to apply for that variation. It's high time now to cut down that bureaucracy and let people just do it once like a driver's licence and then you just move on.

There's a big body of work that we're aware of where we see the pain points and it's time to revamp the entire system around DCI.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm happy to hear that, because as I said, we were at a point where we had reduced bureaucracy there by about 65 per cent and they won international awards; well, they won a local award as the best place to work and an international award for customer satisfaction. It's disheartening to hear now that people are complaining that you can't get answers and that sort of thing.

In speaking to those persons, one thing that came to me as a suggestion, like what we had to do with Planning when we implemented the online services there, would be that DCI consider setting up a small business concierge where small businesses can submit majority of their business applications, their licences, their permits, their company filings, et cetera, with dedicated account managers and operate similarly to how CEC [Cayman Enterprise City] has a dedicated area. They have fixed KPIs, fixed costs and all that sort of stuff, but it helps them get through the bureaucracy of it all, which sometimes is because of the more complex types of licences they have to deal with. I just wanted to offer that suggestion.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. It's a very good suggestion to take on board as we revamp the area.

One other thing that occurred to me to be mindful of, which is part of what we're going to have to reconcile, because as you know, the history of the Department of Commerce, it was really a tool for local business and it's supposed to be, how can I say... perhaps less burdensome than in the financial services sector. However, the area known as DNFBPs, the designated non-financial businesses — real estate, precious metals — not just for Cayman but for the globe, that has now come under the gaze of the FATF [Financial Action Task Force]. In fact, in the 5th Round, for the first time world over, they now have a specific standard that they have to hit. We are going to have to be able to reconcile the fact that they are now turning much more into a regulator, but still balance that with the fact that these businesses are on a different scale than your JP Morgan and your Goldman Sachs. There is that balancing act that I wanted you to be aware of, but I take the suggestion on board.

The Chairman: Member for George Town West.

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

Mr. Chair, through you. There has been a significant increase regarding pop-up garages in residential communities — I'm not too sure if you're aware of it — often without Planning approval, of course. It is creating a nuisance in the community and also, it's actually a safety concern. Can the Minister advise whether the Government is considering any policy changes to actually strengthen the enforcement powers so that agencies have greater teeth to address compliance when it comes to unlicensed or unauthorised garages operating?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair. It's not just garages. There are multiple mobile businesses popping up, there's even a mobile garage. What we're having to do is to try to come to grips with enforcement around this new mode of doing business and pop up garages to have greater enforcement tools. I'm not passing the buck, but it will take a multi-agency approach to make sure that everybody is coordinated, because sometimes you'll go to one agency and they'll say, *well, that's not under me, that's on the police*. Then they go to another one and they say, *well, that's DCI*. We need to have a greater multipronged approach to go after these illicit activities.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you, Honourable Premier. I think you have hit the nail on the

head with the multi-agency approach. I think we know what the problem is, the question is whether or not there's a commitment for creating such a thing to be effective. I know that you and the honourable Member for Savannah share the same feelings as I do about these infractions from a small business perspective, particularly in neighbourhoods.

Am I hearing a commitment from yourself to create a multi-agency task force to deal with infractions for small businesses or businesses, period?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Not necessarily increase bureaucracy and create another agency, but make sure that they're all working together. I think the right word might be "task force", and I think that's the word you use, to make sure they're joined up not just physically but [sharing] their data. Also, data separate from a customer service standpoint, you'll have somebody ask you for the birth certificate— why? It's with the registry. We need greater data sharing from a customer experience, but also from an enforcement experience and then able to agree that they're going to work on problems together and not just say, *well, that law falls under the police, this one falls under the DCI* and then only one agency responds.

I think it wouldn't be the creation of another agency but an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding] Task Force that we're going to agree to work on these particular infractions that are known and seen throughout the community.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Premier, through you Mr. Chairman. Furthering the garage concern, there are pop-up illegal garages and then there are actual legal garages. For example — I will not say the neighbourhood because there's only one of them there, so the persons will know who I'm talking about — we have a garage legally licensed in a neighbourhood on Crewe Road. During my tenure as Minister, I was quite upset. My community called me and I went down there. I was like, *what's this garage popping up here in this neighbourhood?* They rightfully just took the licence out and said, *you know, I have a licence by DCI*.

It questions our framework. I think this gets into the zoning of low density/high density and the cross-section approach. I think that we may have it a little bit wrong because we have licences being approved in... Maybe it's in high density just because it's in the central part of George Town, but it's still a neighbourhood. People are questioning, these businesses pop up in small neighbourhoods that have small roads and then they have the cars parked on the side of the road and then nobody can get through their neighbourhoods, and so forth.

I think that DCI needs to improve its enforcement, not only when someone calls but go out and look for it. That's trying to address the broken windows syndrome. I guess this is not a question, but I'm asking that they take a more proactive approach, rather than waiting on calls. I'm not suggesting that they're not, but the sentiment in the public is that they're not feeling it, because every day we see illegal business activities across the Cayman Islands, not only in a garage perspective.

I'll stop there, but to move on to my actual question, which was about the music levels infractions in neighbourhoods as well. Again, in George Town Central, it doesn't seem to be fixing the levels. A very senior, well-loved and looked-up-to community member, Miss McField on McField Lane — every single night she has to deal with the loud noises. By all means, small businesses should have the opportunity to have an entertainment business licence, but they're not enclosing that music into their own premises and disturbing everybody else. I just don't feel the enforcement arm of this multi-agency approach. Maybe it's because DCI thinks it's the police's problem and police says, *well, this is a business licensing problem*.

Ultimately, we have to do a better job of it. When we talk about the effects on quality of life for people, it's these small infractions which are not traditionally [part of] a Caymanian way of life — we would not dare disturb our neighbour with such disregard. If we do not take a more forceful or proactive approach, the broken window syndrome, eventually you'll see a derelict building and we've seen them physically now.

I guess that was a rant rather than a question. Hopefully the Premier can say if they're going to be doing anything about music levels, pop-up garages and also this growing concern about mobile car washes.

You would never know whether they're licensed or not. When you say mobile, you have car washes that are mobile and licensed, but they stay at the same spot every single day. You can go there and find that same car wash company there. I think people are circumventing what the mobile car wash was intended for and the people who are suffering are those who put in the major investment of paying higher licensing fees and government taxes to have a stationary one. It's practically undermining much of the car wash industry, if I dare say. There are many environmental concerns as well with the chemicals being used by these car washes, where they do it, whether it's going into the water line system or not. I think the parameters of that maybe need to be examined. Maybe I should bring a motion but I'm only bringing these to your attention.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, through you Mr. Chair. Several items to unpack in that, I'll go in the order that I remember.

In relation to garages and where they're located, this is where, when we try to revamp it, we need the multi-agency approach. If it comes to the Trade and Business Licence Board and it's been vetted by Planning that the density was fine for that business, then the board doesn't really question beyond that. If it's a restaurant and [Department of] Environmental Health (DEH) goes and checks and gives the relevant certificate to say the restaurant is fine, then DCI accepts that. Then DCI is in an awkward position to go and enforce if they're holding a certificate from another agency to say this was fine. You all need to start talking together before this is approved to make sure that everything stacks up. That might cause a bit more pain in the process because then people might have to wait a little bit longer for the licence, but at least we know the product is more solid.

The point about the number of garages and car washes points to a whole other body of work, do we get to a point in the country— and this is a question, let's talk about it openly — where there's a moratorium on certain businesses? When I saw the list of how many mobile car washes there are... can we verify and say that they're all washing cars? Does everybody know who everybody is? Additionally, this is another big piece of work and we might as well talk about it openly — fronting.

An Hon. Member: Yep.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Is the 60/40 rule in this country actually working?

An Hon. Member: Nope.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It's the opposite. Do we need a whole other framework? I'm just throwing it out there for the House because you would be stunned. Maybe I should bring the list of mobile garages, mobile vendors to show you. I'm sure some of you can maybe name ten, easy, but now it's into the hundreds. Who are all these people? What are they doing? Do we have a track of all this? This is why in this case, and some people might be surprised to hear me say this, but in other countries as well the FATF is not necessarily wrong in asking *who's behind each of these businesses? Who are the beneficial owners?*

I think for ourselves, for our Caymanians, if you're listening to them, they're saying *Minister, Opposition Leader, you sure that 60 per cent is owned by a Caymanian in that business?* I think it's a wide open field that we have to come to grips with in the country.

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

The Chairman: I have to take members in order; Member for George Town East, Bodden Town West, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Member for Red Bay.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart, Elected Member for George Town East: Mr. Chairman, I think what we've done here is identify this issue and this problem is far bigger and far wider than I think we have ever appreciated. I have to say, for the first time I'm being asked to get involved in my communities because of illegal operations, car repair shops and body repair shops. I had one just two weeks ago and I got the DCI and the DEH involved. I'm happy to say that they did take care of it and it was shut down.

The latest notification I got of an illegal operation was just Saturday, up on Crewe Road in my constituency. They have been operating there and could very well be some sort of threat to the safety of people who live in the neighbourhood. Now I have to go to DCI again and probably the NRA or DEH to get them to look into it. I think it needs urgent addressing and that's just my observation from what I see taking place today.

Thank you for that little bit of input, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Premier. Just on average, roughly how many prosecutions does DCI engage in per year?

The Chairman: The Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'll be happy to get that number and provide it for you. That is not a stat that I would necessarily have to hand.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you.

One number in particular that I would like for you to focus on for me also — there was an incident several years back where someone was running an illegal gas station in Prospect area that almost blew up the entire neighbourhood. Now OfReg [The Utility Regulation and Competition Office] was dealing with one part of it, but I understand that these individuals were actually business people also. I went there that night, I mean, it literally almost blew up the entire neighbourhood and I would still like to know what prosecution was done. Running an illegal gas station next to residential homes...

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, I was there that night, I saw it myself. I would still like to know what happened to those individuals. It's one thing to be going after a garage, but as the Member for George Town

Central said, you make a garage slide, and then the gas station pops up. I can tell you, nobody wants an illegal gas station beside them. I'm curious to know what the outcome of that incident was, because people should have gone to jail for that.

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: The Chief Officer is here. I'll give an undertaking to get that information and bring it back to you.

Needless to say, from all the comments so far, reform in this area is ripe. I don't want to throw the civil service completely under the bus and say that they're clueless and they're not all working together, but I do think we need a much more formalised multi-agency approach that has teeth.

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the conversation was going on earlier about illegal garages and a variety of other businesses, my cell phone started popping off. I had a number of constituents contact me about the exact concern and I'll just read what one said: *What about the commercial fishing boats in residential areas?* If you could add that to your list as well, please.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Sorry?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: In canals and so forth?

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Yes.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Sure.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thanks.

The Chairman: Are there any further questions? *[Pause]* No further questions. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as FSC 36 - Trade and Commerce Licensing and Supervision in the amounts of \$2,706,178 in 2026 and \$3,213,897 in 2027 to form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 36 passed.

FSC 37 - International Engagement for Financial Services

The Chairman: FSC 37 - International Engagement for Financial Services.

There are no questions. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as FSC 37 - International Engagement for Financial Services in the amounts of \$1,883,321 in 2026 and \$1,819,864 in 2027 to form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 37 passed.

FSC 38 - Support for Small Businesses

The Chairman: FSC 38 - Support for Small Businesses.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr. Chair, is this a new appropriation?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Broken out, yes.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Can you remind the Committee what the numbers were for 2024/2025?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: This is FSC 38, right?

This was under a different Ministry in 2024/2025. Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce didn't have it in the last term, it was under Investment, Innovation and Social Development. I don't have it to hand because it wasn't part of this Ministry, but I could try to find it.

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

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, thank the Minister. I do believe that it's a fairly decent increase. If my memory serves me, it was around \$0.5 million in previous years and this is very good news for me. As you know, I am passionate about that centre, creating that centre and passionate about small business and Caymanian entrepreneurs.

I was also delighted to read in the handout you gave out about some of the new initiatives being done, [like] the export development programme, which is fantastic. That was something that we were looking at when we formed the centre. The UK Treasury Office was very keen on this, and they, at that time, had committed to working with the centre on that, even offering office space in Hong Kong and all sorts of things. That's fantastic news. The genius programme seems like another worthy programme if you want to speak to it, to say a little bit more.

My question is—

- a. Are we at a point yet where the Centre for Business Development (CICBD) can provide an ROI [return on investment] to the country — this was the intention — where they can say, *we have helped create 25 new companies. They have imported X amount of product, X amount of work permits, et cetera*. Do we have sight of that ROI yet?
- b. The biggest hurdle for any small business in Cayman is financing. Does the Government have any intentions of putting any programmes in place, whether with the Class A banks or through other means, for clients of the centre to access financing?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, through you, Mr. Chair. This is an area where there's no point reinventing the wheel. It came from Mr. Hew in his time and it's one of the areas that I have been more than happy over the years to try to increase as much as possible because of the reasons that are the foundation of your questions, of how it impacts and the cohort of young Caymanians who have come through — I shouldn't even say young, new businesses [rather] because they could be of any age — and the success rate.

Now I do think we're at the rate for 2026/2027 to provide those ROI details because there are phenomenal success stories that have come through businesses. You'll see it on social media how people just needed that start, and not necessarily sometimes financially, but just how do you start a business? They may have the concept and the idea in their head, but how do you put together articles of association and all the filings that go through it? The centre is amazing.

It's also amazing in terms of its staff. It's a success story that is now led by a Caymanian director who has been in training and had that succession plan and that vision from the beginning, Ms. Thais; so it's fantastic.

In addition to these programmes which they have gone out and sourced — this isn't the Ministry top down, they have researched how they can continue to elevate themselves — from memory they're working

with at least one Class A bank, but we're trying to get other Class A banks to come on board for that initial start-up capital. All of the cohort want to be independent, so they're just looking for that start of either knowledge or small financing, once they know that their business plan is sound, to just get going. This is why you will see the increase in the area.

The Chairman: Honourable member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Premier. Expanding on the point that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition just made, when I look at CIMA's stats with regards to Q1 2020, which was prior to the COVID pandemic, I noticed that the total loans in the production, manufacturing and construction sector was US\$382 million, then five years later at the end of Q1 2025, the amount was actually US\$369 million. There's been a lot of activity since then, but you can directly see that there are issues in terms of businesses obtaining finances based on what the banks have been lending. Considering that some of those loans have been paid down during that period of time — these are net loans, so that would mean that gross loans would have been a little bit different.

I know one of the things that the Government is looking at is concerning, again, using certain guarantees and initiatives, especially with regards to the construction industry and, based on these numbers, it definitely requires some kind of intervention to make sure that we find ways to incentivise financing. At the end of the day, it comes down to one simple rule: the only way to grow any country is to have policies to expand the middle class, and the two ingredients needed to expand the middle class is access to capital and access to credit. We need to sit down and find ways to start helping our own Caymanian people and, as we said, start looking at ways that we can create our own Caymanian millionaires.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. The member makes an excellent point and that's why you see these additional programmes listed in the spreadsheet because part of the motivation is the bank seeing that these are viable businesses; the bank is there to make money. A number of these businesses, when they came forward for the one Class A bank, now have been able to sustain their loan package, so the more that we're able to increase their knowledge to get started, the more we will continue to incentivise banks.

There are also other programmes in terms of access to capital where we look at, I think we call it the Home Programme (previously the GGHAM [Government Guaranteed Home Assisted Mortgage] Programme), to get people back into homeownership. We

do need to find those tools that incentivise greater lending and if the Government has to kick in, either through support from small business development or other programmes, that's how you get people on the road to success.

The Chairman: Thank you.

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. Through you to the Premier. We heard yesterday that Government met with the various key sectors on the fees. I'm assuming that your Ministry was involved, particularly from a small business perspective. Can you say what the feedback was from the small business association or the sector in respect to the taxes and fees that are being increased?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you for the question, member. You may recall that when the revenue statement was made there was a statement to say that that was one of the areas where — I think we went over this on Friday — consultation was ongoing. The biggest point of feedback so far was on the lower end of the fees and whether or not those are palatable, for example for liquor licensing on smaller restaurants and hotels; and if not, whether or not we would then increase on the higher end and eliminate those categories. The conversation is ongoing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Premier. Through you, Mr. Chairman. Obviously, particularly when it comes to restaurants and the cost factors for labour that are non-Caymanian, this will have a major effect on the service industry upon which the tourism product relies heavily. Have there been discussions with the Ministry of Tourism of the effect on the service industry with these costs?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: We continue to talk and make sure that we're trying to align them appropriately, not just at a ministerial level but also at a staff level, and also at an association level.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

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

I hear the word "continuing" quite repetitively. Should I assume that the industry... I'm assuming CITA [Cayman Islands Tourism Association] was consulted, Small Business Association was consulted and that they are okay or accepting or prepared for these increases and have expressed what the potential effects would be? Being former Minister of Tourism, I recognise that this may increase the cost of the service industry. Cayman's tourism product is already a very high-end product and this may result in it being even more expensive. CITA would have responded to that in a particular way.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair. The reason we say "continuing" is because, as you can see, it's a bracketed or tiered approach. The reason that we're continuing is to continue to test the lower end of the bracket because that's the one that's really going to affect most of our average Caymanians. For example, the liquor licence distribution, where it's moving from around \$4,000 to \$25,000, in the scheme of distribution of liquor that level of fee really shouldn't be passed on to the consumer. If we can just double check and make sure that that wouldn't get passed on to the consumer, then we're relatively comfortable that that fee can continue. Once that final round of the houses of consultation is done, then we're relatively confident that within the brackets, if we have to make some adjustments, we will to limit the impact on Caymanians.

The Chairman: Honourable Member, continuing.

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

For confirmation, will this fee also be obligatory to the businesses in Cayman Brac? Particularly that of the liquor licensing fee moving from \$4,000 to \$25,000.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'll double check because the Brac has its own small and micro business programme where they have some carve outs and they're not included in the distributor Liquor Licensing Board here because they have their own board. I'll double check that point.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Just for the record, I would ask that you consider not doing it for Cayman Brac. I would probably have the support from the Minister from the Brac that the cost factor in Cayman Brac is already overwhelming. They're all small distributors in the Brac and moving from \$4,000 to \$25,000 would be a hard cost for distributors over there.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No. There are no distributors there for that fee section.

[Crosstalk]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Either way, Mr. Chair, the point is that the member wouldn't have to ask because Minister DaCosta chases me about this in Caucus.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Let us look at it because we're trying to make sure that that doesn't happen for the Brac and Little Cayman.

Maybe to clarify it, the distributors under the Liquor Licensing Board regime in Grand Cayman are the target of the revenue measures, because it's two different boards. What you saw in the revenue package are the distributors who are under the remit of the Liquor Licensing Board in Grand Cayman, not the distributor (I think there may only be one) for the Sister Islands, because it's two different boards.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Through you, Mr. Chair. In that vein and that thinking of being outside of the Cayman controls, would that be the same for all the other fees and structures? Cayman Brac also has a separate board for work permits, a separate board for a number of different things. I'm just trying to get clarity here because they are listening to. Is that same principle going to apply for the rest of the fee structures?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Right, so those under the legislation that I'm moving are in relation to Grand Cayman. If there is any overlap, as I said before, Minister DaCosta has checked a couple of things like the hotels to be sure that we're staying away from the Sister Islands. We're going to, as much as possible, carve them out. They already have the benefit of a micro and small business fee break, so as much as possible, we're going to protect the economy of the Sister Islands.

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to add my piece into this, if you don't mind. I'm still surprised that some of these things weren't checked up before, but be that as it may, please do speak more to small businesses. I've had several small businesses over the weekend contact me with some concerns. The most recent one was this morning with a new concern.

That concern was the impact of the fees for non-Caymanian drivers. The individual is a Caymanian business [owner], he has a number of drivers who are on work permits and the concern is the impact to not

only his employees but a possible impact to businesses, in terms of the additional costs. Additional costs for small businesses needs to be looked at carefully.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Oh, it's all easily said.
Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West. Rescue me.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: While on the issue of fees, can the Premier also look at raising the fees for those bulk fuel providers? Not the retail gas station, I'm talking about the actual wholesale gas station, the Sol and the Rubis. I didn't see it included... if you guys hit them, let me know.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, they're not in this announcement, but I thought we touched them last term?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: They need to be touched again.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: All right, I'll check.

The Chairman: If there are no further questions—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I just want to put it down for the record— if we're going to increase any costs, particularly when it comes to fuel, don't do it to Cayman Brac. Cayman Brac is struggling.

The Chairman: Cayman Brac fuel is actually on the Brac exemption schedule because I am due to take a paper to Cabinet in that regard.

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

The Chairman: Certainly, as we look at that paper, one of the things that Minister DaCosta had already been engaging with me on was how wholesome that paper is. There were a number of questions surrounding this very item, fuel, and whether or not it was fuel imported into or consumed in Cayman Brac, and we're making sure to clarify that completely to ensure that there's no ambiguity.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, while you are doing that analysis— the ship stops in Cayman

Brac and I'm still trying to figure out any reason why Cayman Brac is paying way more than they should when the ship actually stops there. If there's any place being ripped off with fuel, it is Cayman Brac. The Government has already done its part, but the actual people ripping Cayman Brac off are the actual fuel providers.

The Chairman: I take it that that was a statement, not a question.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta, Minister of District Administration & Home Affairs, Elected Member for Cayman Brac West and Little Cayman: Mr. Chair, if I may beg your indulgence, let me just say, although we may be divided on many things in this House, I welcome the support and love for the Sister Islands from all members and I know that the people truly appreciate all that we're doing to help them out.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Since there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question to honourable members that the item described as FSC 38 - Support for Small Businesses in the amount of \$1,563,641 in 2026 and \$1,778,835 [in 2027] on the Schedule, do form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 38 passed.

FSC 39 - Combating Illicit Finance

The Chairman: FSC 39 - Combating Illicit Finance, any questions? *[Pause]* There are no questions.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as FSC 39 - Combating Illicit Finance in the amounts of \$3,471,776 in 2026 and \$3,768,648 in 2027 be added to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 39 passed.

FSC 40 - Registers of Intellectual Property

The Chairman: FSC 40 - Registers of Intellectual Property.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman... No, I think I know the answer myself. Sorry.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Premier. In respect to registration of intellectual property, I think the component of AI [Artificial Intelligence] has become a serious topic within this space, particularly with the ability to frame someone's likeness. You see the film industry is having severe concerns about it and I think that we should be proactive. I think you've indicated that you intend to look at the legislation, but I think it's important that we register it here because what we're seeing is AI's ability to take someone's likeness not only visually but by way of sound. It's becoming detrimental to democracy and media as a whole, where you can't tell the difference between... deep fakes, I think is the term that they're using.

I think that I would like to hear that the Premier is actively looking at this area to amend our legislation to protect the Cayman Islands from that in all aspects, not only from business but also person's personal life. If we don't put in the necessary restrictions by law, people could probably use deep fakes here locally to scam people, undermine their truths, and a number of different things. I just want to hear from the Premier if that's something on their radar and if we could look forward to hearing any amendments in the future.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Excellent question. Thank you, Mr. Chair through you. The answer is yes, that body of work is being conducted under our National AI Innovation Task Force. One of the areas of work that we recognised, and I think it was the Member for Bodden Town East last week that referred to an EU law. The EU is one of the regions that we have seen that have taken the bull by the horns and have actual published legislation and policy on AI and its uses. Although this department will be an agency that has to be consulted as a relevant stakeholder, it's a much bigger question than them.

The Chairman: Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Quick question to the Premier. Premier, when does the FATF 5th Round Mutual Evaluation take place?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: For me, it feels like every day, but the scheduled timeframe is that the assessors will be here December 2027.

The Chairman: Member for George Town East, continuing.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Wow. Thank you, sir. That date then has been pushed back?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No, that's it. I think I referenced it before in speeches here; December 2027. That's been the case.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay. Thanks.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: That's when they arrive. That doesn't mean that you're not starting the work now for the round; that's why I said somewhat half-jokingly that for me, it's every day, but assessment landing on the ground to look around and perform the actual assessment is December 2027. Working backwards, we are working up to that date.

The new round is on now. The last FATF Plenary that I attended in June, we saw the first Mutual Evaluation Report of the first country, so we were able to take away and see what areas were being probed the most. It was a very interesting exercise. So the round has kicked off, but the landing on Cayman in terms of the assessment starting is December 2027.

Mr. Chair briefly, to go back to the Member for Bodden Town West — yeah, the big bulk [fuel] distributors were moved up to \$25,000 last term.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's \$25,000 per month, right?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: *[Laughter]* As an annual licence. They were, as I said, touched, so you didn't see them this round, but if you're advocating for a further increase, we can take it on board.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I am advocating for a further increase.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I just wanted to have that fact be part of the record, it did go up last term.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: It's heartening to hear members advocate for increased fees, recognising that when you do it, let's say to Jacques Scott, which would be a distributor, if you try to break down this increase per bottle of beer, we're talking about fractions, of a fraction, of a fraction, of a cent. These inflationary pressures of a \$25,000 fee, it will be interesting to see in the next couple of years who's right or who's wrong.

Needless to say, since there's no further questions on FSC 40 - Registers of Intellectual Property, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as FSC 40 - Registers of Intellectual Property in the amount of \$654,627 in 2026 and \$835,483 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: FSC 40 passed.

MOA 6 - Regulation of the Cayman Islands Currency

The Chairman: MOA 6 - Regulation of the Cayman Islands Currency. *[Pause]* No questions.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3) I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 6 - Regulation of the Cayman Islands Currency in the amounts of \$1,050,000 in 2026 and \$1,050,000 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 6 passed.

MOA 8 - Collection of Fees

The Chairman: MOA 8 - Collection of Fees. *[Pause]*

As there are no questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 8 - Collection of Fees in the amounts of \$271,360 in 2026 and \$280,632 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 8 passed.

MOA 12 - Regulation of the Financial Services Industry

The Chairman: MOA 12—

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. In respect to the regulation of the financial services industry, can the Premier say whether there are any plans to change any legislation or regulations in respect to the ratio of Caymanian practicing attorneys versus the attorneys practicing Cayman Law overseas?

By way of background, if the Premier wants the context of my question, about 5 or 6 years ago I think it was, we went through a significant consultation period which created much controversy when the laws were changed to the ratio of firms having an attorney practice overseas, compared to how many local attorneys they had. It is my understanding that there are considerations for the changing of that ratio. It's significant to the continued development of the Caymanian attorney pool here. Can the Premier say if there's any intention to change those ratios?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, through you, Mr. Chair. That wouldn't form part of this appropriation vote for regulation of financial services, because attorneys don't fall under CIMA. The regulations and the new framework will come under the Attorney General on the Portfolio of Legal Affairs. That's where the advancements are being developed, not under this appropriation vote. We can take the question when the Attorney General is here under, I think, Portfolio of Legal Affairs, but that is not within the remit of CIMA. These appropriations are votes for budgets for CIMA.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, the Premier is 100 per cent correct, but [I'd like] his input as the Minister for Financial Services and the foundation of the question I'm asking is related to financial services. I can wait until we get to MOA 14 which talks about the policy advice, if it's a policy position to change that. I'll take his direction.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Only for the purposes of making sure that we're discussing things at the appropriate time. These next set of votes all the way down to MOA 25 are all in relation to CIMA and CIMA's policies. Attorneys are completely not within CIMA's remit. When the Attorney General comes, we can discuss the framework around attorneys and I'm happy to weigh in, but the detailed mechanics of the

developments in that area all fall under him, so it would be better for him to explain the thinking and the process going forward, not in relation to the Monetary Authority.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Premier.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I do accept that. I'm going to just wait till then, but the Attorney General doesn't create policy. The Attorney General cannot pass legislation and only can make recommendations, and because it's the financial services industry, from a policy perspective, you would either be aware... or if you have not been notified of it, then that's fine. I just still think that the scope of the questioning can—

The Chairman: Member, the Premier has made this abundantly clear. We're going to get out of Finance Committee by Wednesday afternoon. He is going to weigh in when the Attorney General gets here.

Any further questions on MOA 12?

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Mr. Chairman, I do have a question.

The Chairman: Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Through you to the Premier. Premier, in your speech at the beginning you talked about seizing the opportunities in emerging areas of financial services, you mentioned reinsurance specifically. I think we've been at that for a number of years now. How successful are our efforts thus far? If you have the numbers, could you share the total number of reinsurance licences in existence at this time?

The Chairman: Excellent question. Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It's an excellent question, spot on to the appropriation. Let me just get the CEO to give me the latest numbers.

In a nutshell, the last time that I reviewed them they continued to increase; particularly in Class B3 and also in the Class Ds, which are the licensed reinsurance that have boots on the ground.

The challenge now isn't so much that, because the business is coming our way. What the business wants as a response, which was in the opening remarks, is marching towards the standard of NAIC—Qualified Jurisdiction Status. At the moment, the Monetary Authority has developed stronger relationships with that US regulatory body and some of the commissioners, I've met them personally on the road.

This almost has to be looked at as akin to, in a way, the FATF. This is a country initiative, not just a Monetary Authority initiative. It takes the Ministry, it takes the regulator, which will be the main facilitator of the application, and also industry to make sure that we

are able to meet the standard and evolve legislation where necessary.

The next engagement point will be the 8th and 9th — at least for me those are two key dates. The 7th, 8th and part of the 9th of December is the next large NAIC Meeting of Commissioners and I plan to go in person to continue to foster those relationships. I'll come back to you on the stats, but it is growing.

That's part of the budget, so I'm glad you raised the question. The concern is, since success is coming, we do not want the insurance division to become overloaded and then can't handle the applications that are coming and then we dissuade business, because it's becoming too slow; can the Monetary Authority handle it? Part of this budget is to give the insurance division increased staff to be able to handle the workload, not just from a numbers perspective but also from an expertise perspective. This is where jobs like actuaries and senior policy advisor in insurance are going to be all that more important. Which is why, since we've gone down this road, we'll have to look at modest modifications to the Public Authorities Act to be sure that CIMA can pay competitively so that we can get that talent.

There are three things happening sort of at once:

- Increase of the budget for the division of the staff;
- Finding ways that we can pay market rates for talent within the regulator that can handle these more complex applications; and
- Run the various stages of approach to obtain the NAIC.

The Chairman: Member for George Town East, continuing.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Through you to the Minister. Does it make sense to consider splitting the two, insurance and reinsurance, breaking them out separately? I know the work and the complexities are different and reinsurance is not necessarily a straightforward insurance company, never will be. Just your thoughts on that.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It's something that we have thought of. It's a question that's come up over the years, but at the moment, I think if the insurance division itself is able within its units to handle the work streams, then we might not necessarily have to create an entirely new division. They might be able to do that internally among themselves.

I have the latest stats here, but they are incredibly small. If we could have a larger copy then I can pass it out to the entire House, because this is public information.

The Chairman: Premier, you meant printed small not small in impact on the economy.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Correct. The font is incredibly small to read— microscopic. You need them enlarged to show the large numbers.

The Chairman: Thanks for that clarification, Premier.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Mr. Chairman, through you. One final question.

The Chairman: Member of George Town East, continuing.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Yes, sir. Thank you. Premier, the other area that you mentioned that I'm interested in is that of the family offices. My sense is that it is a fast growing area. Do we have registers of numbers of offices here; and how are they regulated?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Excellent question, thank you. Family office is an interesting one because a family office could do just about anything. They don't fall into a neat bucket like say reinsurance or banking, because the family office could be bankers, they could be reinsurance. It's an area where we're starting to think about how do we group and categorise them, because some might be regulated by DCI, if they're more so commerce; some might be regulated by CIMA, depending if they're on a regulated business line.

Leave that with us because this is business — which is a good thing that was not necessarily coming to Cayman over the last few years, but for a variety of factors, they're beginning to see Cayman as a hub that they can do business from. We're still trying to organise ourselves in terms of exactly what bucket do you put them in, because they don't fit neatly because they could do anything. It's essentially people who are managing their own money in activities that they want to invest in.

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

The Chairman: If there are no further questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 12 - Regulation of the Financial Services Industry in the amounts of \$22,718,140 in 2026 and \$23,408,933 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 12 passed.

MOA 13 - Assistance to Overseas Regulatory Authorities

The Chairman: MOA 13 - Assistance to Overseas Regulatory Authorities.

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: I risk annoying you this morning...

The Chairman: It is afternoon.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, but it is Monday, so we have a long week ahead of us.

My concern about my previous question, Mr. Chairman, is that the relevant stakeholders and technocrats that support the Premier may not be available when it's time for the Attorney General to address the previous question. I know you've given your direction that the question will be answered when the Attorney General is here, but the persons who advised the Premier, as per the description of MOA 14 which allows this Committee to question about, may not be here to assist.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your guidance to the Chair. Your question was around ratios of overseas lawyers to local lawyers. Am I correct?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Correct, sir.

The Chairman: I am with fair confidence that between the Premier and the Attorney General and his Chambers, they will have requisite support to answer that question appropriately and would not need the assistance of CIMA. I'm very confident of that and the Government is very confident of that.

Do we have any further questions MOA 13?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yes sir. Will the Chief Officer for Financial Services be available for when the Attorney General will be here to help answer the relevant question? It's not only CIMA, sir; the support staff for the Premier when dealing with financial services matters, upon which my question is founded, is not with the Monetary

Authority. Again, I risk annoying you, but I'm just trying to make sure...

The Chairman: Oh no, no. No annoyance. Thank you for assisting the Chair. The matter as it relates to attorneys, the Honourable Premier has given me the indication that he's perfectly happy to weigh in on those policies.

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

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 13 - Assistance to Overseas Regulatory Authorities in the amounts of \$886,443 in 2026 and \$916,730 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 13 passed.

MOA 14 - Policy Advice and Ministerial Services

The Chairman: MOA 14 - Policy Advice and Ministerial Services. As there are no questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 14 - Policy Advice and Ministerial Services in the amounts of \$791,467 in 2026 and \$818,509 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 14 passed.

MOA 25 - Monitor Compliance with the Anti-Money Laundering Regulations

The Chairman: MOA 25. As there are no questions on MOA 25, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as MOA 25 - Monitor Compliance with the Anti-Money Laundering Regulations in the amounts of \$7,100,590 in 2026 and \$7,343,196 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MOA 25 passed.

CMA 1 - Policy Advice to Cabinet on Maritime Matters

The Chairman: CMA 1. As there are no questions on CMA 1, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CMA 1 - Policy Advice to Cabinet on Maritime Matters in the amounts of \$332,000 in 2026 and \$332,000 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CMA 1 passed.
NGS 85 - Cayman Finance Services

The Chairman: NGS 85.
Honourable Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Yes, sir. It says Cayman Finance Services, but is this going to the entity Cayman Finance?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, we should probably amend that because it sounds like services. It is Cayman Finance. Delete the word services.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Fair enough. Then I am happy.

The Chairman: Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The amount of \$1.375 million, is that the amount that they requested or did they request more?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. They always request more.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Which is not unusual for any of the entities in any or all of our budgets.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: What was the amount they requested, if you don't mind me asking?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It was in the region of millions of dollars.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Premier. What exactly are we getting for this \$1,375,000?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'm glad you asked that because it ties to the Member for Red Bay's question. The range of activities that the entity would like to do are all well-intended, but what's most important to us is on the spreadsheet that I handed out—continuing their efforts as much as possible to promote the jurisdiction and showing up at key conferences.

Protection is also key. They now have two staff members that are former media professionals who challenge and correct headlines that come out about the Cayman in international markets that aren't quite right. They've now had some success with that and we want to continue to do that. There's a whole different ring to it when a media professional calls another media professional house to challenge them on the media rules [rather than] the Government calling in; it's not proportionate.

Then, the last thing is community engagement. Continuing to try to press and have programmes so that young Caymanians could get in their jobs with their member firms.

Those are the three key areas.

They have other proposed activities to their membership, and we've said, very kindly, we understand but we think that that can be funded more by your members. These are the areas in which the Government seeks to gain the most benefit.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad the Premier actually said that because it goes into my other issue. This output covers CF 1, CF 2, CF 3, CF 4 and CF 5, and when you go through the purchase agreement starting on page 71 and look at CF 1 that deals with promotion, the total amount of

money allocated for both 2026 and 2027 is \$686,795. That's on promotion. I'm fine with that.

Then you move to CF 2 that deals with protection. In 2026, on page 73 under the purchase agreement, it is \$138,205 for 2026 and \$138,205 for 2027.

Then you move to CF 3 - Product Development. Again, \$138,205 for 2026 and \$138,205 for 2027.

Then there's CF 4 - Community Engagement. That is \$205,897 for both 2026 and 2027.

The one that caught my attention was CF 5 - Member Engagement. The description reads, **"Ensure a high degree of collaboration, cooperation and engagement with private sector firms and associations."** As for that amount, it is \$205,898. That was the one that actually caught my attention in the sense of why are we giving them \$205,898 over both years to deal with their private firm sectors and association engagement? That's the one I have an issue with.

Now I've been in this House long enough to remember when they were getting around \$300,000 per year from Government, and now it is \$1,375,000 per year; basically a million dollars increased. Now, this is not to say that they don't do good work, but I'd be curious to know what the other members of this association contribute. If you go on their website and see who the members are, these are people from organisations with very deep pockets.

I noticed the bankers are also represented on it. Again, Mr. Chairman, I put my craw in the fact that the Class A banks last year made US\$986 million in revenues and US\$750 million in profit. I think at a minimum this is about protecting their industry that makes a lot of them very rich and I think they should be contributing much more to Cayman Finance because these are the ones that are really benefiting more than, in some cases, the Caymanian people. Premier, that's the one I have an issue with. That \$205,898, which is about \$411,000 over two years, for them to engage with their members when their members should be paying for that themselves.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair and through you. I appreciate the member's question because it's aligned with the Ministry's thinking. Although the purchase agreement says that, we're still talking to them about channelling our monies for the three areas that I mentioned. In addition to that, even though we were sort of tongue-in-cheek earlier, on a more serious note we have told them that the reason that we cannot accept the actual ask — not what's here in the budget, but what they actually proposed for 2026/2027 — is because when we survey member firms, the pain points that Government has to take care

of first, which is what Mr. Hew started with, is the service delivery of the entities themselves and make sure they have appropriate staff and systems.

At the end of the day, we're trying to reach the end client and make sure that the end client is getting the service, whether that end client is local or international. That's where the bulk of Government's money has to go. Your members should do the promotion of the marketing of the industry.

I am happy to and I've given a commitment to the board to talk to industry firms that aren't members at all, who aren't paying anything. They've had some success now and I think two or three, or even four have announced publicly that they have become members; two more Class A banks now have become members; and we can then discuss whether or not the existing top tier membership could contribute more. Now it's at least getting to where the revenue overall is nearing 50/50, but government has to stop at some place, because for the reasons that you indicated the marketing and promotion of the members' activity should come through from the members. What we're interested in most importantly is making sure that the public-serving entities have the resources they need because that's what counts for the end client.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, continuing.

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

Mr. Chairman, the reason why I ask that is because I can tell you, in a former life, I worked for an organisation that was a member of Cayman Finance and we used to cut a cheque, I think for \$100,000 per year, and that was just one organisation. I'm looking at the list of all these organisations, I'm looking at the number of people whom they have employed based on their website and I'm wondering if the membership contribution has remained [in the] at least \$100,000 club; and if so, how many of them have increased from \$100,000 to what it is today? That was about 10 years ago we were paying \$100,000, so I'd be curious to see what the banks are paying now.

The reason I decided to raise this publicly is so that when the Premier does go and speak to them, they understand the political pressure that he will be under to justify why he's giving them this kind of money. You can't have situations where some of the people in the organisation are getting paid more than public servants and then the public is ticked off about the salaries that we are paying some public servants in this country when we're donating money to organisations that are paying their people more than civil servants are getting paid, and civil servants are the ones who are getting paid to really promote this country. I just need to put that out there publicly so the people can understand the

pressure that the Premier will be under now to justify this money going to this organisation.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair. I've already expressed the pressure I was under from Caucus. When the overall ask came in, it's very, very hard to justify it when, to repeat the last point, what counts to the end user is how our public services deliver.

The members themselves do their own marketing outside of this. We know that the business is coming. We have stats to show month on month that financial services is growing, so that part of the promotion is happening itself. We're interested in these sort of key critical areas and knowing more, and getting more firms to become members. Now, as I just mentioned, there are Class A banks that had never been members that are members now because we have given them the push to say, we have to stop at some point in government. The industry has to lean in and lead this and stay within your lane of continuing to promote the industry. We have to take care of the authorities and the agencies.

The Chairman: As there are no further questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as NGS 85 - Cayman Finance, \$1,375,000 in 2026 and \$1,375,000 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 85 passed.

NGS 94 - Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants

The Chairman: NGS 94.

Well, the two accountants raced to the mic.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: [Member for George Town East,] Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thank you, sir. Through you to the Premier. Premier, this is a new appropriation this year and it appears to me that it's going to be used primarily to hiring resources to supervise or to undertake the anti-money laundering (AML) supervisory functions. Is that correct?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you Mr. Chair. Yes.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay.

You also mentioned here something about a consultant. Is any of this money being used to pay consultants?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think there is a proposal within CIIPA [Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants] to have a small consultancy. The reason for this is what I mentioned previously. There is a new FATF standard which didn't exist last round for DNFBPs, so CIIPA now has to become more than just registering and [being] the accounting profession standards of itself, they now have to more seriously enter the realm of AML; therefore, they'll need consultants, they'll need staff.

What I will also tell the member is that I plan that some of this will be offset from the Auditors Oversight Authority (AOA) because that authority has now lost its way and we'll be looking to wind it down in 2026, and the small amount that it got would then be put to this entity. Once Cayman National Bank (CNB) becomes delisted from the stock exchange, there are no other entities for the AOA to regulate, so it has now lost its purpose. It needs to be wound down and then its money will be transferred. What we have earmarked in our minds is to transfer that money to help CIIPA now become a quasi-regulator.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Through you, sir. One further question.

The Chairman: [Member for George Town East,] Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: This support will be ongoing. It's not just a two year thing here, it'll be ongoing into the future.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. Yes.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay. Thank you.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Premier. One question just popped in my mind when

you mentioned the Auditors Oversight Authority. You said they have become inactive at this point?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: They've lost their rationale. There aren't any more entities now for them to be an authority over.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay. I know you probably would not have the answer to this question, but you can send it to me afterwards. I remember that was one of the government boards where they were getting paid \$4,000 per meeting. From that standpoint, is that board still being paid, or can you find out if that board is still being paid?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: That is another reason why, once I saw Cayman National Bank delist and they no longer have a purpose, it's not justifying those fees. It's time to wind it up and close the whole thing down.

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

I noticed from the purchase agreement on page 191 that this spend is going from \$200,000 this year to \$800,000 next year. That's quite a big jump. What's the reason for that jump?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. Just so we're clear, we're not talking about the AOA, you're back now to CIIPA, right?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, CIIPA.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It's not a jump. This is completely new. For 2025, we gave \$200,000 so that they could get started, but the actual costing of what they'll have to do to get through 2026, particularly to prepare for the FATF 5th Round, is the \$800,000; so this is completely new.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The last question: you trust accountants to regulate accountants?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: As so aptly demonstrated by our Chair who's an accountant, who's regulating the conduct of the Member for Bodden Town West, who's also an accountant. Yes, I'm comfortable.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's exactly my point, Mr. Speaker, because men would argue that I'm getting away with murder!

The Chairman: As there are no further questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as NGS 94 - Cayman Islands Institute of Professional Accountants, \$800,000 in 2026 and \$800,000 in 2027, to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 94 passed.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: [Member for George Town East], Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Yes, sir. I don't think any members on this side has indicated, so go ahead and put the rest of it to a vote.

BLOCK VOTE:

**TP 63, TP 80, TP 85
OE 6, OE 94, OE 139
EI 67**

The Chairman: Thank you for your consideration.

Members, therefore, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve all remaining items on the Schedule described as —

- TP 63 - Support to Local Business Associations, \$63,750 in 2026 and \$63,750 in 2027;
- TP 80 - Support for Business Initiatives, \$50,000 in 2026 and \$50,000 in 2027;
- TP 85 - Support to Local Financial Services Associations, \$93,500 in 2026 and \$93,500 in 2027;
- OE 6 - Contribution to Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, \$84,000 in 2026 and \$84,000 in 2027;
- OE 94 - Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development Global Forum, \$55,000 in 2026 and \$55,000 in 2027;
- OE 139 - Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network for the Caribbean (ARIN-CARIB), \$8,375 in 2026 and \$8,375 in 2027; and
- EI 67 - Ministry of Financial Services and Commerce, \$506,500 in 2026 and \$100,000 in 2027,

to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 63, TP 80, TP 85, OE 6, OE 94, OE 139 and EI 67 passed.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, may I have a few closing comments to thank staff, et cetera.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier, just before you do, might I congratulate you and the Ministers thus far for the detailed schedules that you've provided to the Committee. Again, something new and innovative in Finance Committee. It has not been done before and it's very helpful to the listening public so that there is a balanced view as to what the NCFC is doing in Finance Committee. Not only is this more meaningful and impactful so that the public doesn't have to try and remember a debate that happened days ago — and it was just a debate, just political talk — we are actually providing this Committee with more detailed information than has ever been done, and we're also ensuring that the committee members are getting real detailed commentary around new initiatives that are in the Appropriation Bill.

This adds to not only members' knowledge and information, but it also adds to how this Committee is heard by the public. We are here as servants of the public in this public forum and I certainly hope that as members of the public have listened, they too have been able to follow along and ensure that they are understanding how their monies are being spent. Premier, very good innovation. I welcome your closing comments.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you. That was part and parcel of what we had decided — not trying to rehash what was part of the House debate, but just to provide, as you say, balance. The point was, was the debate on the Appropriation Bill going to yield this sort of scrutiny and portioned responses? We took the view that there may be a better way to do this.

You mentioned to me that there were indications that this had been done in the past and then I perked up and said, even more so. The way in which swaths of the community now digest information, more so [now], it's in splices and sound bites. Let's be innovative.

The scrutiny and examination happens in Finance Committee anyway, if we have a detailed schedule of the Ministries that will be going next, that takes away the back and forth of who's going when, and who will start and who will stop. We have an organised de-

tailed schedule. Each Ministry can provide the overarching detail while going into the micro detail in a much more organised fashion, and it's a way in which the public can tune in to their heart's delight as to whether they want to tune in for financial services or tourism, and so forth.

Yes, time will tell; but certainly the point to be rejected is, which I would wholeheartedly and completely disagree with, that it was done as a measure of deceit. That is not the case. It was whether or not there's a better way to deliver and examine this important public information for the next two years of our fiscal process.

With that Mr. Chair, thank you very much. I'd like to thank the Chief Officer in the Ministry, all of the staff, all of the departments, Monetary Authority, Maritime Authority, Civil Aviation Authority, the Department of International Tax Cooperation, DCI; far and wide, everyone has been working flat out for the country's number one economic driver. I am so pleased and thankful to lead a Ministry of incredibly dynamic, intelligent, hardworking civil servants who work under incredible pressure [even] outside of the budget process, just on a daily basis to keep this precious industry of ours intact. God bless you. Thank you all and may God continue to bless these Cayman Islands.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Premier.

[Member for George Town East], Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Yes, sir. Thank you for your indulgence. On behalf of our Leader, I echo the same thanks to everyone who has been here and sat through all morning, [they have] answered questions and helped in so many different ways. We are grateful for it as well. Thank you, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Members, at this stage I would propose we take the luncheon break and recommence at 2pm.

Committee suspended at 1:10pm

Committee resumed at 2:26pm

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

Members, when we took the break we did so at the end of the appropriations to the Premier in his role as Minister for Financial Services and Commerce. We now commence appropriations to the Premier under another of his ministerial and financial responsibilities, which are appropriations to the Cabinet Office.

I call on the Premier to make a short statement to the Committee.

STATEMENT ON THE APPROPRIATIONS TO THE PREMIER – CABINET OFFICE

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good afternoon and thank you Mr. Chair. In keeping with our current approach, I offer an opening statement in relation to the 2026-2027 budget of the Cabinet Office.

Mr. Chair, as the Premier, I have a distinct set of responsibilities and duties separate and apart from my role as Minister for Financial Services and Commerce. In my capacity as Premier, the Cabinet Office is the Portfolio assigned to me in this constitutional role. They are the centralised point of collaboration across the executive branch of Government that bridges the civil service and the political arm, Cayman Islands Government (CIG) and the relationship with the UK Government, CIG with other Overseas Territories (OTs), CIG and key international bodies, and most importantly, CIG and the Caymanian people we serve every day.

The collaborative role that the Cabinet Office plays can be metaphorically likened to a bridge. A bridge connects separate points to each other exemplifying the Cabinet Office's coordination function joining together various parts of Government and indeed Cayman to the outside world.

Importantly Mr. Chair, bridges require maintenance and so this budget also recognises the need to continue to invest in the key tools, services and people within the Cabinet Office that we as a country have continued to rely upon and who answer the call quietly and faithfully.

The Cabinet Office comprises 11 vital departments and units:

The Office of the Premier provides strategic, executive, and administrative support to the Premier and Government Caucus, maintaining neutrality as civil servants who capably support the government of the day.

The Cabinet Secretariat supports the Cabinet and National Security Council by preparing and disseminating Cabinet Agendas, Papers, Minutes and Decisions. It also issues Tax Exemption Certificates, expected to generate \$10 million in revenue this year, and provides secretarial support for the Appeals Tribunal and Refugee Protection Appeals Tribunal.

The Department of Communications delivers modern, inclusive, and informative communications through specialised units covering public relations, gazettes, internal communications, content and production, and strategic communications. The Department manages Government's digital and traditional channels including CIGTV, gov.ky, and social media platforms, ensuring all communications meet the six principles of being accurate, engaging, timely, shared, transparent, and approved.

The Policy Coordination Unit develops cross-ministerial policy and provides objective, politically neutral advice to Cabinet and the Premier. The unit ensures consistency and quality of Cabinet Papers through strategic analysis prior to submission.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands (HMCI) leads the National Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme, coordinating activities through the National Emergency Operations Centre. HMCI builds resilience through preparedness training, response coordination, communications campaigns, and recovery planning.

The Cayman Islands National Weather Service observes, understands, and predicts our weather and climate while fulfilling international obligations through valuable monitoring and research.

Radio Cayman provides high-quality educational, cultural, entertainment, and religious programming across all three Islands. As Radio Cayman celebrates 50 years of continuous service, we celebrate with them and thank them for their faithful service—particularly their integral role in emergency broadcasts during storms, hurricanes, and other disasters.

The Information Rights Unit, though small, supports the entire public sector by leading on freedom of information (FOI) and data protection. As champions for transparency, accountability, and ethical use of personal data, this unit helps Government earn the trust of the people we serve.

Protocol Office manages diplomatic visits, administers the Flag Scheme and honours system, organises ceremonial events, and manages Heroes Square, among other responsibilities.

Cayman Islands Government Office – United Kingdom (CIGO-UK) serves as our official representation in the UK, facilitating opportunities for Government, people, and businesses. CIGO-UK has successfully navigated the transition from Conservative-led governments to the Labour Government while building relationships across the political spectrum. Most importantly, our All-Party Parliamentary Group has been re-established. Cayman's reputation remains strong and highly respected in both Westminster and Whitehall.

The Strategic Innovation Unit drives digital transformation within Cabinet Office, promoting digital efficiency, policy modernisation, and service agility through centralised project management.

Its contributions to national outcomes, Mr. Chair, Cabinet Office's remit is both local and global. Its work contributes significantly to Broad Outcome 6: Efficient, Effective Public Services and Broad Outcome 7: Good Governance and Public Safety.

Key Projects for 2026-2027

E-Cabinet (under CBO 2) - Within the next two years, Cabinet Office will replace outdated manual

workflows with a secure, paperless digital platform to manage Cabinet and National Security Council processes.

Since our first Constitution in 1959, Cabinet Papers have been processed manually—a cumbersome, difficult-to-track system. As the Cayman Islands has grown, so has the governance structure and the astounding amount of paper generated weekly.

The e-Cabinet solution will:

- Improve public service delivery through technology;
- Reduce costs and environmental impacts of printing volumes of papers for weekly Cabinet meetings;
- Improve cross-Government communication and collaboration to streamline decision-making; and
- Ensure confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility of Cabinet and National Security Council documents.

Members of Parliament already benefit from increased efficiency and convenience through streamlined creation, sharing, reviewing, approving, and managing of Cabinet documents.

Re-platforming of gov.ky (under CBO 17) - Mr. Chair, Oracle's announcement that it would end its web-based content management by December 2025 forced a major pivot. The Department of Communications has been leading the transition of gov.ky—Government's primary digital ecosystem—to the Liferay platform. Without this re-platforming, gov.ky and approximately 60 other Government websites would have ceased to function entirely. A system failure of this magnitude would have risked losing public trust, exposed Government to legal and compliance issues, and interrupted essential communications.

However, with challenges come opportunities. The new platform delivers improved accessibility, search optimisation, and analytics capabilities. The estimated cost over two years is \$2.3 million, directly supporting Broad Outcome 6.

This project also establishes the foundation for the new Digital Delivery Unit within the Department of Communications, responsible for maintaining, governing, and expanding the gov.ky ecosystem.

Thus far, we have:

- Migrated priority sites and prepared 36 core entities for transition;
- Established governance, metadata standards, accessibility requirements, and new content models; and
- Conducted content audits, user testing, and technical on boarding for multiple ministries and agencies.

The public will enjoy a fresh product with modernised navigation, improved search functions, and more timely content updates. This Herculean effort is projected to be delivered on time and under budget thanks to exceptional project management.

National Weather Service Enhancements (under CBO 25) - This budget includes \$1.4 million for completion and fit-out of the National Weather Service's new home, with an expected move-in date before June 2026—right in time for the next hurricane season. The building will allow better quality observations and warnings, especially for aviation, while resolving the hazardous situation of having hydrogen tanks and generators in the General Aviation Terminal.

The budget also includes \$200,000 to establish a centralised data integration platform, bringing together weather sensors in a strategic database accessible to key stakeholders, further enhancing public safety.

Other focus areas include:

- Installing four new automatic weather observing stations;
- Creating a network of storm surge sensors as part of our early warning system;
- Launching a strategic partnership with the UK's Met Office to assess our current operations and develop a roadmap for the future; and
- A greatly enhanced Weather Service website with improved user experience—and Mr. Chair, I have challenged the team to develop an app for easier access to information, including views of the newly refurbished Kearney Gomez Doppler Radar.

I'm heartened that under Cabinet Office guidance, the radar has had no breakdowns or extensive downtime over the past two years other than scheduled maintenance. As hurricane season prayerfully draws to a close, the radar, which has reached the end of its lifespan, will be refurbished.

After a competitive procurement process, Leonardo, the company which originally installed the radar, has won the contract to refurbish and modernise it. This project commences this weekend, and the radar will be offline for six weeks to provide the country with much improved services, data, and accuracy. The new radar will cost approximately \$622,000 and have an expected lifespan of 10 years.

Mr. Chair, given what we have witnessed with our beloved neighbours, we are wise to invest in our local weather service for better forecasts that help us manage daily activities, save lives and protect property during adverse weather conditions.

Mr. Chair, in the 2026/2027 budget year, the Cabinet Office will continue to build bridges of collaboration:

- Across civil service - to ensure high quality policy advice, policy development and policy training and the effective communication of Government's plans and decisions across all channels to keep the public duly informed; and utilisation of a more effective and efficient E-Cabinet — also, to ensure best practice and governance in areas

such as FOI, Data Protection and the communities of practice in both the communications and policy professions; Between political and civil service - by supporting the team within the Office of the Premier, refine the process between Caucus and Cabinet, support joined up Government as exemplified in this budget and the NCFC coalition agreement and the public communication of a shared vision between each Ministry and Portfolio. The role of the Cabinet Office in supporting the principle of collective responsibility cannot be understated;

- Between the Cayman Islands and the UK - through supporting the lines of communication between the Premier and the Governor on agreement of Cabinet Agendas and co-Chairing the National Hazard Management Executive and cooperation on matters of National Security. They also diplomatically guide the CIG's relationships across Whitehall and Westminster, coordinate our preparations for the Joint Ministerial Council coming up next week, and circumnavigating the constitutional relationship between the Cayman Islands and the UK. This will also include the development of a new strategic partnership between the UK's Meteorological Office and Cayman Islands National Weather Service;
- Between the Cayman Islands and other OTs and CARICOM Members - through training placements and direct support for other OTs, serving as a liaison between Caribbean OTs and other regional Heads of Government, being an active member of the UK Overseas Territories Association, managing our Associate Membership of CARICOM, and coordinating regional disaster management support and hurricane relief efforts; and
- Through enhanced public communications of our policies and priorities - this includes our beloved Radio Cayman. This requires new avenues, channels and approaches to promote feedback from the community such as the Public Consultation Hub, support for community based Disaster Preparedness Management, and improved utilisation of weather tools such as our soon to be refurbished Kearney Gomez Doppler Radar, as well as work on a special initiative to ensure that the protection and promotion of our Caymanian identity and heritage is at the heart of all of our work.

In closing, when the Cabinet Office builds strong bridges of collaboration, the entire Government stands firmly connected, empowering our people with better services, stronger protection, and greater long-term opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Premier.

[Member for George Town Central], Mr. Bryan.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say thank you to the Honourable Premier for the details outlined in his statement.

Before asking three questions on this statement, I just think it would be important to highlight and thank the honourable former Premier Wayne Panton for his visionary decisions about investing in the National Weather Service enhancements. I recall how strongly he fought to make sure the centre was developed, so it's worthy of highlighting. Also, the All-Party Parliamentary Group that has been re-established, which the Honourable Premier was a key component of when he was the Head for the UK Office, and I'm quite sure he's excited to hear about the reestablishment of it.

To my question, Mr. Chairman, [regarding] the Refugee Protection Appeals Tribunal, in the last administration, which I was a part of, much of the legislative changes that were developed were in hopes of speeding up the process of those who were seeking asylum here on the island. Can the Honourable Premier give us any updates on whether the process has been reduced in time, therefore, reducing the cost to the people of the Cayman Islands?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you and through you, Mr. Chair. I did ask for a report on that to see if there was any backlog. There's currently no backlog and we're still looking to see how we can further enhance the process to expedite decisions far more quickly. The tribunal appointed is still in action and is chaired by Ms. Nova Hall.

The Chairman: [Member for George Town Central], Mr. Bryan, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Chairman and thank the Premier for that answer.

Moving now to the support team for the Honourable Premier, which has civil servants and political appointments. Can the Premier say, obviously without

names or salaries, what positions have been appointed to support the Premier's Office? Descriptions of their jobs would be helpful.

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was going to come to that under OE 96, but we could dispense with it now. Or, we can just take it in order, because there's quite a bit of detail to go through.

[Crosstalk]

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE PREMIER – CABINET OFFICE

The Chairman: Members, before the Committee are appropriations to the Honourable Premier in regards to Cabinet Office.

CBO 1 - Development and Coordination of Government Policy

The Chairman: We begin with CBO 1 - Development and Coordination of Government Policy.

Any questions on CBO 1?

Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to get your guidance before I ask the question because the CBO [1] appropriation description says, “**Development and coordination of Government policy**”, and gives quite a wide description. My question really is why the fees were not calculated into the budget's inflation rate; is that a concern from a policy perspective?

The Chairman: What fees?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: The fees that you listed out on Friday.

The Chairman: Okay, let's be very clear and I'm not quite sure where we're going to head with this — none of the fees are going to have inflationary pressures on the local economy. Here's why: the vast majority of the fees are financial services-related and do not directly impact consumption in our domestic economy and therefore have no inflationary pressures on the domestic economy. We are not rolling out fees that are on fuel or on goods and services, such as food, et cetera, that are in the domestic economy. Fees going to accounting firms do not hit our domestic economy, they audit offshore hedge funds, offshore insurance and reinsurance companies, and the like; therefore, there is no direct correlation to say this is going to have inflationary pressures that would move the needle on our domestic estimate of inflation.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am assuming that the ESO [Economics and Statistics Office], who is charged with the duty and responsibility to make those considerations to the list of fees highlighted by yourself on Friday, has given you that confirmation that it will not have an inflationary effect.

The Chairman: As I described during the delivery of the statement, the ESO is one of the agencies who had direct input into the revenue estimates themselves. Why would they have input into the revenue estimates themselves and then in another part of this document not take consideration of them? It's all together.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much. As long as you said it on the record, because I will question whether or not ESO was involved, as I am informed differently to that — but you are the Chair as well as the Minister responsible for that area. I think you answered the question. Thank you. I'll move on.

The Chairman: Any other questions on CBO 1? *[Pause]* No further questions on CBO 1. I put the question in accordance with Standing Order 83(3) that honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 1 - Development and Coordination of Government Policy in the amounts of \$1,993,409 in 2026 and \$2,071,299 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 1 passed.

CBO 2 - Support and Servicing to Cabinet and National Security Council

The Chairman: CBO 2 - Support and Servicing to Cabinet and the National Security Council.

I recognise the honourable Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Premier— and this is just a general observation. I noticed overall that expenses increase between 2025 and 2026 by roughly \$1.1 million, and then from 2026 to 2027 [by] an additional \$500,000; in short, it is \$1.1 million compared to 2025 and roughly \$1.6 million compared to 2027, using 2025 as the base year. I noticed that a good chunk of it actually occurred in CBO 2. Some votes went up, some sections went down, and so I'm just looking for the overall increase between the

two. Then I also noticed that CBO 2 went back down again in 2027, so I was just trying to understand where the costs and the movements are. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you for the question. Through you, Mr. Chair. If I could refer the Member to the table that I circulated, under CBO 2, under the row of variance. There's a 41 per cent increase variance from 2026 over 2025 and then 23 per cent, the driver for that is the cost for establishing the e-Cabinet project.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, I saw that, which then begs the other question — this is the accountant in me — wouldn't that be capitalised or something for a project of that size?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Some of the software is also OpEx [operating expenses], so subscription fees. Not all of it is capital in terms of the actual hardware, some of it is also software.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Then I noticed that the cost went down from \$3.4 million to roughly \$3 million in 2027, so it was that drop back down that kind of threw me off a bit.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good question, so we're hoping that once we've completed the work in 2026, it should be less cost to bring it home in 2027.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, fair enough. Thanks.

The Chairman: Any further questions on CBO 2?
Member for George Town East, Mr. McTaggart.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thank you, sir.
Question to the Premier, with this move to a new platform for communication, the gov.ky domain, it's not going to affect that, will it? You're not going to be losing that.

The Chairman: Premier,

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No Mr. Chair, and I'll come to talk more about that in CBO 17. This is just about the e-Cabinet.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay, fair enough. I can wait.

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3)—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, it's a procedural matter, and I hate going back and forth for the questioning, but it's because unfortunately, the details around what the Ministry is doing — which is wonderful. I really like the statement, I really like this detail. However, what now happens is that it doesn't give us enough time to quickly come up with the questions. If this was done in the budget process the Official Opposition would do its job properly, go off and study what was said, be able to research and formulate proper, structured questions; as opposed to the time pressures of, *are there any other questions*, while I'm trying to formulate the areas and all the information.

I just think it's important to highlight for the record, the reason why the conventions are there. I know I'm going to miss something because we're going very quickly as I'm digesting the information presented just within the last couple of minutes.

The Chairman: When a budget debate is done, there's no guarantee of everything that's in one of these statements being a part of the debate. Let's be very, very clear. I certainly hope you were that thorough when you were Minister.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: I surely was, sir.

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 2 - Support and Servicing to Cabinet and National Security Council in the amount of \$3,413,787 in 2026 and \$2,976,326 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 2 passed.

CBO 9 - Protocol Services

The Chairman: CBO 9 - Protocol Services.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, through you. In respect to the national events, have there been any additions to this that wouldn't normally be here? I think some of them were under culture or heritage before, but I can't remember. I don't have the time to research right now, so I guess I can't ask the question.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I can confirm to the Member, there aren't any additional events added.

The Chairman: Any further questions on CBO 9 - Protocol Services?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I see that there's a 15 per cent increase from last year and a 16 per cent increase for 2027 due to support for an increase in transportation services of officials and visiting dignitaries. Is there an intended increase of officials? What is the driving cost for the increase for transportation of dignitaries and officials locally?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good question. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That is in relation to the cost of the drivers working more hours. As we begin to enhance the Protocol Service and explain to the public the value of having drivers — it saves you a lot of time, if you remember in your experience, to be able to do work at the same time and not worry about parking. We're trying to encourage more of that with more drivers. Then sometimes, as you know, the days are long and they're hard. The driver of the cost is the increased hours to pay the drivers.

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

Through you, Mr. Chairman. I want to first say that I support this endeavour. I understand, just recently being a Minister, the importance of having that time and that support. Many nights I was worried about my colleagues living in the eastern districts after working so hard, worrying if they're going to be able to get home due to tiredness and be able to drive. It also increases your productivity.

My next question is the policy component of it. I know that the Premier is aware that he's [sic] made up of the functions of two main parties and three independents, and the party [of] which he's not [a member] outlined that they would not be supportive of drivers for Ministers. From a government policy perspective, how are you handling that?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, good question. We have already started to formulate a more enhanced driver's policy in terms of the standards and the training for each of the drivers. Unfortunately, we do need to recognise, as you see in many other countries, that there is now a safety component for Ministers. We already have a draft of that policy in collaboration between the Cabinet Office and the police. A

couple of Ministers have already previewed it and I plan to bring it to the full Caucus for approval.

I don't see from the conversations within the Caucus that the Members who want to opt out of having a driver would block the rest of us from having a driver; that's their choice. I do plead with them sometimes because it really is a safety issue. As you know, we work incredibly long hours. It just takes one blink on your way home and that could be it, and you're out a Cabinet Minister. Heaven forbid.

It really is value for money and a safety issue and we are putting the policy in place to enhance our Protocol Services.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Premier. Through you, Mr. Chairman. Just to let the Premier know he has my full support in this endeavour, because being a Member who's gone through it, I fully understand. Thank you.

The Chairman: Since there are no further questions on CBO 9, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question that honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 9 - Protocol Services in the amounts of \$1,111,909 in 2026 and \$1,119,280 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 9 passed.

CBO 17 - Government Communications Services

The Chairman: CBO 17 - Government Communications Services.

[Member for George Town East], Mr. McTaggart, I think this was the area that your question to the Premier would now fall in regards to gov.ky.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: The question I had was basically what I asked earlier, whether the gov.ky domain would actually cease to exist because of the change in the platform taking place.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good question. No, it wouldn't. The work that's being undertaken is the underlying platform that supports it moving from Oracle to Liferay. In fact, it's actually the opposite. We want to ensure that the platform is actually expanded and reaches even more channels and becomes even more efficient and effective. It's the underlying technology platform that's being replaced, not what you would see on the surface.

The Chairman: Any further questions on CBO [17]?
Member for George Town Central, Mr. Bryan.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Radio Cayman component doesn't come under this provision, it comes under CBO 21, right? Okay, I'll wait. Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further questions on CBO 17?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, there is one more. Sorry, I apologise. Thank you.

Can the Premier give us any updates in respect to developments in the communication space? I am very happy that there's a government that understands that media is important and communication with the public is important and that rightful investment and innovation is being done. I just want to actually give them an opportunity to talk about that because if in fact you see new programmes or structures or funding necessary, it's because communication is key to democracy and representation. Anything new that we can expect, particularly as social media and media develops so quickly?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I would be surprised if the vote passed and the Member for George Town Central did not ask something about communications, because I know he's passionate about it.

Although there aren't net new posts, what we're trying to encourage is better pooling of resources and the use of professional fees by the Department of Communications. The budget, like any other department, you'd want it to be larger, but what we found is that since there are embedded communicators within each Ministry — and I can understand the Minister wanting to keep their own communications person close — we still need to enhance the pooling of the information so that we can maximise the messages that go out towards government, and also make sure that we're using as many platforms as possible because there are so many now. A few years ago, it might have just been Facebook and Instagram, but now it's Snapchat and all the rest of it. Some people only consume the news that way, some people don't even pick up the paper anymore. It is a rapidly growing area and I think we're going to have to move with the technological times and ensure that there's a better centralisation — not necessarily the people smashed in one department, but centrally coordinated.

The Chairman: [Member for George Town Central], Mr. Bryan, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm so happy to hear that. I think the Premier and his team fully understands that. They have my full support and they know that.

There is one... I can't remember, what's the Chinese platform called again? TikTok. We had a bit of a concern with that based on the owners, and therefore we never had a TikTok account. I just want to know if we resolved that, because I see that the US has resolved their concerns by having a kind of a separate TikTok for United States as opposed to the TikTok in the other country that I don't want to talk about.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It's a good question. I think that our cybersecurity unit has not quite cleared it as yet, but it is being looked at.

The Chairman: As there are no further questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 17 - Government Communications Services for the amounts of \$4,757,219 for 2026 and \$5,356,048 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 17 passed.

CBO 20 - Assistance to the Premier and Administration of the Premier's Office

The Chairman: CBO 20 - Assistance to the Premier and Administration of the Premier's Office.

[Member for George Town Central], Mr. Bryan.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm not sure if this would be the area... I slightly doubt it, based on the reduction of 25 per cent. This is not the right one.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: What MP Bryan is looking for is OE 96.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. No questions for me on this one.

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question that honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 20 - Assistance to the Premier and Administration of the

Premier's Office in the amounts of \$1,184,658 for 2026 and \$1,185,295 for 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 20 passed.

CBO 21 - Broadcasting of Public Information and On-Air Programmes

The Chairman: CBO 21 – Broadcasting of Public Information and On-Air Programmes.

Mr. McTaggart, Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Just one question, sir. Does this include the CIG TV, as well as Radio Cayman?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yes, Mr. Chair, through you.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thanks.

The Chairman: Any further questions on CBO 21?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair. I have a question. Radio Cayman is obviously our well-trusted and depended-upon national radio station to which I give my full support. I'm saddened to see that their budget has reduced by 5 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively. Maybe the equity injections might have increased, I don't know. When we get there I'll look at it then. Can the Premier or his team give us the direction of the advancements of the broadcasting of Radio Cayman for me, please?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair, thank you. That's a good question.

I'll give credit where credit is due, the lady Member for Cayman Brac East put a lot of time in trying to refurbish not just the studio, but also give them more post. Due to the length of time for recruitment and procurement, much of it that should have been done, was not done. I think they have now net three new posts — I think the appropriation that the lady Member fought for gave them 10 post. Coming into 2026 and 2027, they were able to have net new three, but based on us having a soft freeze and having to manage OpEx carefully, we weren't able to add anything further, but the works that the lady Member introduced are on the way.

The studio component - that refurbishing will hopefully be done by the end of this year. There's also the reception area. The procurement had to be rerun for reasons I won't bore you with, but hopefully we will still be able to complete it by the end of this year. The bunker is done. There are two more bunkers that are not on site, one is in Northward and one is in the on the Sister Islands. The Northward one is ongoing and the Sister Islands' is still on the radar, probably will not be completed before the end of this year, but it's firmly on the radar to be coordinated between myself and Minister DaCosta in dual capacity as district admin and also for Home Affairs, because a bit of it falls under his area in Home Affairs.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister say when the broadcast efforts for Radio Cayman will be added to those many social media platforms you were talking about? People are not always on one particular one.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Good question, it's an excellent question. It's something that we're keen to do to boost the listening audience of Radio Cayman. Both this appropriation and the one that had to do with communications generally, we're trying to link that to make sure that Radio Cayman gets boosted on far more platforms. It's just not happening now, and it's a shame because really good information and content goes on to Radio Cayman and we need to increase the viewership.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you for that answer, Premier.

Through you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Premier give a commitment on timelines? We've been speaking about this for a couple of budgets and I still only see it on certain platforms.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Fair, very fair. I would like to see that increase happen within the first two quarters of the year. Or at least if it's not all the way, you see increased exposure for Radio Cayman.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Okay. I'll follow up with a question by the end of June if I haven't heard anything by then.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I would welcome the PQ [parliamentary question].

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Lastly, Mr. Chairman, in respect to this output group, Radio Cayman's principal operation is to allow the government distribution of information, but also the opposite side, being the Opposition's opportunity to do so. If I remember correctly, the model that Radio Cayman was trying to develop was that of BBC, which is funded by the core government, but an independent body that is not dictated to by the government of the day. This allows for neutrality and accountability on both sides.

Can the Minister say if there is a policy outlined of host talents that they adhere to in respect to the delivering of those mandates?

The Chairman: The Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'll double check whether or not there's a specific policy just over Radio Cayman, so give me a moment to confer. However, they'd still be bound by the overall neutrality as civil servants.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Just as I thought, there isn't a specific policy in relation to Radio Cayman, but they are bound by the overall Code of Conduct to maintain neutrality.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you Premier for that answer.

How is this policed to ensure that the requirements, though there are no specific ones for the entity, but the overall requirements are adhered to?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Well, certainly, so I don't stray over to section 55 of the Constitution, it's not by anyone on the front bench. That would be squarely within the remit of the Portfolio of Civil Service and the Deputy Governor.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: That is totally fair, and I'll leave it there, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: If there are no further questions—

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Actually, I have a question.

The Chairman: Mr. Saunders, Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, the actual budget cuts— there are some staff positions that were vacant before, I understand there have been some cuts. How does that affect remaining staff when staff are basically being retired?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It is a good question because, as I said, it would have been ideal to keep the sup funding posts that they did receive to enhance the services even more, but I'm advised that the entity is appropriately and adequately staffed for day to day operations. There are a couple of posts that have individuals who have met retirement, so those jobs would then become vacant and recruitment in the normal way would occur.

The Chairman: As there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CBO 21 - Broadcasting of Public Information and On-Air Programmes in the amounts of \$2,150,479 in 2026 and \$2,229,487 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 21 passed.

CBO 22 - Services Provided by the London Office

The Chairman: CBO 22 - Services Provided by the London Office.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Through you to the Honourable Premier. I just want to confirm that this funding is separate from any funding that would have been received under the financial services because of the function it plays with the students, et cetera; and in answering that, could you let me know what the positions are of the three team members? It's a little confusing, it says, Cayman Islands Government UK has three team members, two of whom are Caymanian, and then the Cayman Islands Government UK Office has a manager who is Caymanian. Could you explain the positions of the three?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you for the question. Yes, this is separate from the appropriation under financial services which are all the other offices. The London Office falls under the Cabinet Office because of the unique role that it plays in terms of communication between Cabinet and myself in the post of Premier. Then also, on the other end with the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office.

The makeup is the head of office, Dr. Tasha, who is, I guess in this sense, the manager, the leader of the office and supported by two more. Hold on, let me get the names of their post.

I know one I want to say off the bat, my friend Phillippa Knights. She's definitely one of them. She's the other Caymanian, just getting one more.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Then the other is an admin support who is Caymanian. Dr. Tasha plus two.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Okay. Thank you. It says the Cayman Islands Government UK has three team members, two of who are Caymanian. It does go on to say that it has one manager who is Caymanian.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: It should be better worded. There should be three total Caymanians, one who's the leader and then two subordinates.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see that the increase in the cost is merely due to the cost related to Cayman Day. Was Cayman Day always under this provision? I thought it was with culture and heritage before. No?

The Chairman: Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: No. It's always been under this [item]. It doesn't mean that we don't necessarily have another Ministry contribute, but the appropriation itself has always been here.

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

The Chairman: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule entitled CBO 22 - Services provided by the London Office in the amounts of \$1,477,531 in 2026 and \$1,482,319 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 22 passed.

CBO 24 - National Hazard Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery Services

The Chairman: CBO 24 - National Hazard Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery Services.
Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, I want to start off by congratulating the Hazard Management Cayman Islands (HMCI) and their team for the excellent work they've been doing over the years. I must say that the preparation and communication with members has been at the highest level. I am happy that we have not had to use their services, but I felt that we would be prepared if anything happened.

Are there any communications or connections to a potential NiCE programme with this group in respect to if there were to be a clean-up exercise? I'm just trying to find synergies where the programme could help us as we transition in the labour market, immigration controls and all that. We will have that line of people who are not finding work where things like this could be a synergy. If so, would the Government consider it?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Let me make sure I understand the question, or the suggestion. Tell me if I'm wrong — is it that this entity helps manage the NiCE programme or have people who work for the NiCE programme? Can you just clarify the question?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Definitely not manage it.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I didn't think so. Just clarify it for me.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Not manage it. I'm talking about having partnerships with the Minister who is responsible for delivering the NiCE programme to coordinate in the event of. As you can see, it says, coordinating distribution and relief supplies, clean-ups of debris. First thing you hear, clean up, I think, okay, there's an opportunity here, right?

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, through you. If the question is in terms of collaboration and when there is, hopefully not a disaster, but even a downpour of rain that they can use their technology which has increased in the last few years to pinpoint

exactly which area is affected the most, there should be that collaboration. The programme itself as you alluded to earlier would be run under the Ministry of PLAHI [Planning, Lands, Agriculture, Housing & Infrastructure].

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly, Elected Member for Cayman Brac East: Thank you, Mr. Chairman to the Honourable Premier. In light of [Hurricane] Melissa on Jamaica, is there any cause for further scrutinising of the policy to ensure that we can adapt to the evolving environmental climate change effects, especially in the Caribbean?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Yeah, we can always do more. What I've been impressed with, with this particular unit is their reach in the region in terms of the information that they gather, the data analytics that they're able to obtain and the technology that they've been incorporating.

They will also be working in hand with the Ministry of Sustainability and Environment in terms of climate change policy because it's real, we're seeing the effects of it. As you know, an avid watcher of the weather, it was close. Melissa could have been us. The more in which we're able to adapt climate mitigation policies, the better off we will be. Yes, this unit plays an integral role.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East, continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you Mr. Chair and thanks to the Honourable Premier. As a follow up, is there any elasticity in the current budget for capital acquisition for more Starlinks? Again, in light of what we saw occurring in Jamaica — and if not, that's fine, as long as one's attention is brought to it. I know it's a fairly new technology and some in the private sector have accessed it from what I understand. We have moved along from where we were several years ago, but I think that perhaps the Honourable Premier and his team may want to ensure before June next year that we are well up, because that's another lesson I certainly learned from looking at Jamaica.

The Chairman: Premier as you answer it, recall that on Friday, we have just approved Starlink via OfReg.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: That's correct. That's the answer to the lady member's question. Although not within this entity's remit, it is useful to them in terms of getting that connectivity of Starlink. With that clearance from OfReg underway and hopefully some

capital from PLAHI that will then be another backup source of Starlink.

The Chairman: As there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule entitled CBO 24 - National Hazard Preparedness, Mitigation, Response and Recovery Services in the amounts of \$1,985,867 in 2026 and \$2,087,843 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 24 passed.

CBO 25 - Meteorological Services

The Chairman: CBO 25 - Meteorological Services.

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

The Chairman: I caught the eye of—

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I will cede to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I note that this used to be under tourism. I would have thought that the Minister of Tourism would like to be able to control the weather, you know, but— just a bit of levity there this afternoon.

Mr. Chairman, through you. Would the Honourable Premier like to give an update on the radar repairs? I know it's down.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I had a summary of it in my opening statement, but it has come to its end of life. A new one is coming online now. The radar will be down for about six weeks so that work can continue. The team is quite confident that (and let's hope that they're right) with cold fronts coming in, the hurricane season is, in effect, over. They will then in that six week period, rely on regional tools to make sure that they can still predict the weather and monitor the weather, but then it should be updated at six weeks and the lifespan should be for another 10 years.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. This question could have also gone under OE 125 but I'll just ask it now.

One of the things that we saw during the US Government lockdown was that their hurricane centre basically got closed down in the process. We are basically very dependent in the Caribbean, there are certain things that we have taken for granted and now we recognise that the US is having its own challenges right now. From a Caribbean standpoint, while I recognise that this is an expensive endeavour, is there something that we're looking at regionally where we can be a little bit more self-sufficient with regard to weather services, as opposed to depending on an agency that provides a very valuable service that we see now can be shut down.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think so. Let me just confer to give you an updated answer. I think so though.

[Pause]

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you, Mr. Chair. As I suspected we're developing stronger links within the Caribbean. Within the US as a backup, there is a contract with the University of Texas, building a relationship with the University of Texas through John-Paul to be able to have that resiliency in case we can't rely on it. Then in addition to that, we're also building resiliency with the UK Met Office. In the event the US goes down, we still have some capability.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thanks, I just wanted to make sure that you guys were talking to my constituent, John-Paul, that's all. Correct answer. Thank you.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, I saw him smile when I said the name, so I figured that was the route.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Honourable Premier confirm whether or not we are still a Member of the CMO, or the Caribbean Met Office? There are advantages that they offer the region — now that the radar is down and would obviously create a black spot.

Secondly, if I may have two in one, Mr. Chair, seeing that we are in Europe for our financial services protection of the jurisdiction, I wonder if the Premier would give an undertaking to add to the agenda in due course, the possibility of having a memorandum of understanding with the Euro because it has proven to be a much more accurate forecaster and predictor platform.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Through you. Yes, I'm happy to give that undertaking to the lady Member, Mr. Chair. Take Hurricane Melissa, for example, when we were watching the different models, you could see that the EU model was also helpful. Now, in this example, people may have said that it was a bit more cautious and it looked a little bit scarier for Cayman under that model, but what it did is it helped enhance our preparedness that Melissa could have hit us. So yes, I'm happy to give that undertaking and yes, we are still a Member of the Caribbean region, so we still have that resource to rely on, particularly in the six weeks while the radar is being reconstructed.

The Chairman: Mr. McTaggart, Member for George Town East.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Thank you, sir, I appreciate it. Through you to the Premier. I wasn't quite sure what you were saying with regard to the Doppler radar. Is it the case that what's there now has reached its end of life, all the guts are going to be taken out, and new ones put in, or are we looking at just overhauling and replacing parts?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. I think it would be more accurate to describe it as a refurbishment, than a complete tear down and rebuild.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay. Then I read somewhere in here too that with regard to the Automatic Weather Observation Systems, AWOS, you're going to have four of them. Could you tell me where they're going to be located?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair. There's already one in George Town, so we're looking at West Bay, North Side, Brac and Little Cayman.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Will these observation systems be tied in to the airport and air traffic control there so that planes can gain access to this information, rather than the current system we have of hourly updates?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I'm advised that it will be tied in to air traffic control.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Okay, good. Huge improvement.

One final question. When is the new Met Office slated for completion?

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I think we said that it was June 2026.

Mr. Roy M. McTaggart: Sorry if I missed it.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Premier. This is just a general observation more than anything else. I recall when John-Paul Clarke reached out to us in terms of recognising the challenges and seeing how we could work with different entities to enhance our own weather services, but the message I want to send to residents and everyone who call the Cayman Islands home is that it is through efforts like these, when people reach out to us to offer unsolicited assistance, that is welcome. I want to say to members of the public who have knowledge of many things — just reach out to an MP or to someone in Government if you have a great idea, because sometimes these things can originate from people in the public.

We have a very diverse population. We have people from over 130 different countries. That's people with 130 different experiences that we can all learn from. I welcome everyone who calls the Cayman Islands home to take that kind of approach of saying, *you know what? We see something [already] tried in our country; it worked or it didn't work; be careful of doing this, be careful of doing that.* Maintain those communication lines and just take advantage of the diverse society that we have.

I just want to make that general observation. Thanks, Mr. Chairman

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I take the observation on board, thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, just also to echo the deputy's comments on the wonderful job that the HMCI team does. Also, to congratulate the Met Office and Mr. Powery during the tracking of this storm.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: He stood there in the face of the HMCI executive under

questions about whether he is sure that the storm is going to turn. He reassured us and provided all the scientific details and his experience really shone throughout that process. I felt sorry for him sometimes, but I want to thank him for reassuring us because we were all under pressure from our constituents. *I want plywood, I want this*, and we were saying just relax, hold on. I want to recognise that and thank him for his professionalism.

The Chairman: Thank you. Yes. We have many resources in government and we have to rely on those who are best positioned in those specific areas.

Any further questions? No further questions. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule entitled CBO 25 - Meteorological Services in the amounts of \$2,936,365 in 2026 and \$2,979,309 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CBO 25 passed.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I don't know if anyone has any questions on TP 58 and TP 128.

TP 58 - Support for Services of the Red Cross TP 128 - Sponsorships and Community Support

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the items entitled —

- TP 58 - Support for Services of the Red Cross, \$70,000 in 2026 and \$70,000 in 2027; and
- TP 128 - Sponsorships and Community Support, \$150,000 in 2026 and \$150,000 in 2027,

to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 58 and TP 128 passed.

Other Executive Expenses OE 96 - Executive Salary Reimbursements

The Chairman: OE 96 - Executive Salary Reimbursements.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I think this is the opportunity where the Premier was going to outline the support staff for his office.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair. The verbiage of reimbursement is odd. I think that's probably just some historical hangover that probably should be... It's not quite clear, let's put it that way. It is the line item of the budget which covers the staffing that's politically appointed versus an earlier line item that are civil servants.

In this case, on taking office, I asked the Cabinet Office staff in terms of the volume of work that comes to the Office of the Premier, what have they seen as a model that seemed to be efficient, productive and solid? To give credit where credit is due, they pointed to the structure formed under former Premier, Sir Alden, where he had five staff, so we set up an organisational structure modelled off of that.

The only difference in this case, which required two more posts, is that this is more of a structured coalition. To share resources per our coalition agreement, we allowed each of the two groups, being TCCP and CINP [Cayman Islands National Party], if they would like an executive advisor to them sitting in the Office of the Premier so that they're on the spot when policy is being reviewed and questions come in both locally and internationally, and then offered the same to the Independents.

Thus, rather than under Sir Alden where there are five, we have seven. The Chief of Staff is under Ms. Pilar Bush; for the National Party it is Ms. Juliet Du Feu; and for the Independents, they selected Richard Parchment. We have a data analytics person who has just started recently in Joel Burke; Natasha Whitelock is the Caucus Secretary; Director of Community Engagement is Mr. Anthony Ramoon; and then there's an Operations Assistant day to day, Ms. Diane Welds — so seven in total.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much. That's great detail. I guess that would explain the \$661,000 increase in that line item from the previous administration.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Correct.

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

The Chairman: Any further questions? There are no further questions. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members

approve the item on the Schedule entitled OE 96 - Executive Salary Reimbursements in the amounts of \$1,261,608 in 2026 and \$1,273,608 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: OE 96 passed.

[Crosstalk]

**BLOCK VOTE:
OE 125, OE 132, EI 36**

The Chairman: Thank you members. We will put the question to the following items on block.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the remaining items on the schedule entitled —

- OE 125 - Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency Membership, \$116,400 in 2026 and \$116,400 in 2027;
- OE 132 - Depreciation on Cabinet Office Executive Assets, \$350,000 in 2026 and \$350,000 in 2027; and
- EI 36 - Cabinet Office, \$3,454,877 in 2026 and \$1,128,117 in 2027,

to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: OE 125, OE 132 and EI 36 passed.

The Chairman: I would like to invite the Premier to give a wrap up statement, if he should wish, on the conclusion of the appropriations to the Cabinet Office.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you, Mr. Chair, through you. I'd like to thank all Members of Caucus for their support and the Members of the Opposition for their questions. Thank you very much. I thank the staff led by Samuel Rose; I know it's not easy managing leaders, but you do a very good job in your diplomatic and faithful way, including all of the entities and agencies that support you and support us.

In particular, just as seen in recent weeks as the Leader of the Opposition mentioned, it really was a heartening sight to see all of the agencies that make up the Weather Service and Hazard Management come together as we were monitoring [Hurricane] Melissa. It was as hairy as the Leader of the Opposition described and Acting Director Kerry was under major pressure.

All of the agencies were under major pressure, but they performed brilliantly. They also stepped up when Cayman Islands was no longer in the focus of Melissa, stepped up in terms of helping us organise supplies for Jamaica; so a huge effort.

I look forward to the Weather Service being improved even further and all of the communication touch points that we mentioned being enhanced in 2026 and 2027, and getting on with an e-Cabinet.

Thank you, Sam Rose and to all your directors and managers. God bless.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, if I can say thank you to the staff for their amazing work as well. We appreciate you. We're not there in the Office like them, but we love you as well and we thank you for your hard work.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General, Portfolio of Legal Affairs — I can only hope that they love you as much.

[Laughter]

[Pause]

The Chairman: Colleagues, we will now examine output groups to be purchased by the Honourable Attorney General, found on page 41 of the Appropriation Bill, Appropriations to the Attorney General, starting with LGA 1.

Welcome to the Committee, Honourable Attorney General, and your massively impressive body of support.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, just for the record, the support staff you see here are from the Portfolio of Legal Affairs, some from the Judicial Department and the DPP's [Department of Public Prosecution] Office as well.

Mr. Chair, also, I must apologise, I don't have an opening statement as such, but given that except for the Law School we are essentially a referral agency, it's difficult for us to make projections. We basically depend on referrals from other agencies over which we have no control. We provide primarily legal advice and legal representations for courts and tribunals on behalf of Government and government agencies. Our society has become extremely litigious and therefore we find ourselves spending much time in court and before tribunals.

The FRA [Financial Reporting Authority] as usual is in the business of receiving, analysing and distributing suspicious activity reports, and also dealing with sanctions, including international sanctions. Our

portfolio budget requests for approximately \$11 million, certainly in respect of Legal Portfolio, is geared towards facilitating these services, Mr. Chair. We will be happy to answer any questions as it relates to these entities. Thank you.

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

LGA 1 - Legal Advice and Representation in Civil Matters

The Chairman: LGA 1. I recognise Mr. Saunders, Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank the Attorney General for his opening remarks. I have gone through his financial statements and I think, maybe outside of the Premier, I have full confidence in his CFO.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Generally speaking, I noticed that the increase is roughly a million dollars, using 2025 as a base year, and I know this is primarily driven by staff. There is nothing major that jumps out other than the fact that their full-time staff is moving from a forecasted position of 74 this year, to 80 in 2026 and 81 in 2027, which pretty much justifies the increase.

With that Mr. Chairman, the six new positions that the AG has in his budget, what do those new positions generally cover?

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

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

First of all, we're looking to hire two additional drafters for the Portfolio. There is an increase in demand for drafting services and it is important that we position ourselves to accommodate those requests. We are also hoping to hire a couple of analysts for the Financial Reporting Authority, primarily three additional staff there to handle not just the volume of suspicious activity reports, but also to help with sanctions which has quite a bit of traffic in recent times because of the international nature of these things, including what is happening with Russia and Ukraine, and UK and other countries imposing sanctions. That is primarily the bulk of the hiring.

Just to confirm, they are filling vacant posts, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Any further questions on LGA 1? Honourable Member, continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and thank the Honourable Attorney General for that response.

In terms of drafters — and I'm kind of glad he said that — recognising that the Attorney General's Office also provides support to Parliament, one of the things I think other MPs would find quite useful is, rather than sometimes bringing motions, if we want to make an amendment to legislation will at least one of those drafters be assigned to assist Members of Parliament in that regard? Or is it strictly for Government, and Parliament should be looking for their own resources? Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the honourable member for the question. There is no hard and fast rule that says that we can't assist. We certainly would be happy to do so, within resources. However, what we would understandably prefer is if we are given adequate notice and full background that leads up to the request for assistance. I find sometimes we are basically being asked on the spot within the Chambers, within the hall here, to assist with crafting legal language, and so on. It is not that easy for our drafters to basically sit down and turn those into acceptable legislative jargons; so within resources, honourable Member, we'd be happy to assist.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much. My last observation for now, recognising others may want to question you, I just want to extend my thanks to your Law Reform Commission team. I'm one of those who actually enjoys reading their reports. They did a very good job on the recent Appeals Tribunal Bill also, quite a while back, but it gave me a chance to go back and read it. They did some pretty good work there and I just want to thank and recognise them for the work that they have done because I know it's not easy.

With that Mr. Chairman, I will close off for now.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. By way of a response to the somewhat non-statement statement that was delivered, I think it's important for the record that unless your Ministry or your portfolios of responsibility intend to do nothing new, it's important that you give the indication of what the country can expect from your area as a portfolio for the next two years. That's the purpose of a budget debate. The details are essential.

Sadly, I know that you may have been the victim of a premature shutdown of the budget, because from all of my research, most times the Attorney General and the Deputy Governor would give contributions as to what to expect from their areas of responsibility

— any new highlights, changes, intended things to address over the two-year period. I am saddened because I can't do my job properly to examine those things today to say whether they're good, bad or indifferent.

Anyway, with that being said, I think you opened up the door about the legal advice to MPs in Parliament. Though you have highlighted that there's no hard and fast rule preventing you from doing it, I would say the opposite is true — there is no hard and fast rule mandating that you do it. As a Member of Parliament and the resources necessary for me to do my job in the Opposition, it is essential that we outline what is available to me without subjectivity.

The question is, do the Opposition Members have a right to get services from you? If your answer is no, which is highly possible, we have to address the support systems for Members of Parliament on the opposite side of Government. Hopefully, that question is clear.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: It is clear, but it is broad. You ask whether you are entitled to services from us, now what does that entail?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Services meaning, if I call, can you say no. If I need legal drafting for Bills —

An Hon. Member: Or interpretations.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Member — or interpretations. I find it rather peculiar, where your job is to legally advise the Government, legally advise His Majesty's representative and the Opposition, which puts you in a very difficult spot. I think the roles should be separated and I think there's been some considerations for separation of those things from before. Right now, I'm trying to secure the sources of support for this side. I know you will answer any beck and call from the Premier and the Governor, but we need to know without question where we will get the support to do our job in the Opposition.

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

The Attorney General is the advisor to the Parliament, not the Opposition. To the extent that there are issues being distilled in the Parliament that requires a legal input, the Attorney General's Chamber will provide that sort of assistance. If you are thinking about getting legal advice in a position where that puts you in an adversarial situation with the Government, then clearly as you rightly and astutely pointed out that would be very difficult for the Attorney General's Chambers to do.

However, to answer the lady member who voiced a comment "and interpretation of legislation", that is something that we provide to anybody, because

whatever interpretation we give, it doesn't depend on who it is, it depends on the facts and the law. That is something that we could readily provide whether you are in Opposition or Government. That is our interpretation of the legislation. After all, we are responsible for drafting them, so we think we have an idea what it should be saying.

The Chairman: Honourable Member, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Attorney General. That gives some level of clarity to our predicament that we're in; so, certainty for interpretation, but potential hurdles for drafting. I am certain that our Clerk would be recalling the inputs into this Parliament as we try to clarify the structure upon which support will be available for Opposition. I'll leave that there. I think enough has been said.

Mr. Chairman, my other question for the Attorney General as the legal advisor to the Government is my concern over some of the legalities of some of the fee structures presented. One in particular is the legality to enforce fees on non-Caymanian drivers and their vehicles. Have you been consulted in respect to the legality of that?

The Chairman: Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, honourable member for the question. We don't usually say whether or not we advised the Government on a particular issue. In dealing with legislation, including the appropriation legislation, there is a presumption of legality, so if the Government sought to impose fees, the presumption is that, until a court says otherwise, that it is legal. Until we get to that stage, the presumption is that whatever the Government is seeking to do here enjoys legality.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Honourable Attorney General. Through you, Mr. Chairman. I guess then it would make no sense to ask you whether you think it would be enforceable to do such a thing.

The Chairman: Probably not.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: The presumption is that it is enforceable.

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

Next question, through you, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Moving on to the Law Reform Commission. I know the Honourable Premier mentioned a series of reforms that will be addressed, [including] from election reforms. Let's stick to that one. Can you give us any update on where we are with the process of completion of the recommendations to Cabinet for consideration?

The Chairman: Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair and thank the honourable member for the question. I think he is thinking in particular about the issue to do with cannabis and the lottery.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No, not really, but you can highlight those two. I was actually talking about the reform to the election finance support as well, but you can stick to those two. I just want to give the public some updates on where we are with some of those reforms.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Okay, so in respect of the referendum issues, for example, the cannabis, the Law Reform Commission has done the scoping paper, basically mapping out the issues to be to be looked at. I think the scoping papers were done in October. That is then going to inform some wider consultations, and following that exercise, a report will be done which will be accompanied by recommendations and potentially draft Bills which will give the Government the various options. It is then for the Government to make a policy decision as to what, if any, of the recommendations will be taken on board.

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

Through you, Mr. Chairman. How long do you think before we can have the conclusion/the report completion for Cabinet to consider?

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, if I could make a brief intervention. On this matter of the two referendum questions that were yeses that were deposited with the Law Reform Commission, the Honourable Attorney General wasn't there. In his place was the Solicitor General, and I appeared as a guest to make sure that they were taking on board those two items at their last meeting. As the Honourable Attorney General has said, they have agreed to accept the questions, they started a scoping paper and they're going to come back with details.

[I plan to give a statement to the House with a full update in the December meeting. They recently wrote to me. I haven't had time to unpack it yet, but I](#)

give you an undertaking that in the December meeting, I'll make a statement.

What I will say is, my observation from the meeting is that they were very enthusiastic to get into both questions and deliver the Government advice on how to proceed with their consultations. The timing will be different, because one subject matter is... I don't want to use the word easier, but it's a little bit more straightforward in terms of the decriminalisation of small amounts of marijuana. That one has a more straightforward path. What to do in terms of a national lottery, there were wider issues that they wanted to consider, so the timing will be different. I think one will be shorter than the other, but I give an undertaking to have a statement ready for the December meeting.

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

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Premier. Very well detailed. Don't need to go any further with that.

If I can move my attention to another area of elucidation. The previous administration solidified through a Cabinet approval paper for the compulsory acquisition of a very well-known location called Red Spot, the fisherman's bay. Can you give the country an update on that, within the legal parameters obviously before the courts, just to ensure that there has been no deviation from that policy position to do so?

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you Mr. Chair and thanks to the honourable member for the question. The matter is before the court and it is winding its way, if I might put it that way. I think a hearing date is set for March of next year before the Grand Court, so it is progressing as we speak.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you so much, Attorney General. Mr. Chairman, that's it for me for now. Thanks.

The Chairman: If there are no questions—

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

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I'll give way to the Member for George Town Central.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I see you being so gracious to me today.

The Chairman: As always.

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, another piece of legislation that was hoped to have been drafted, I don't know if the Attorney General can give us some information on it, was to do with the appropriate measures of protection for women particularly. I wouldn't even say only for women, but that is more media publicised — pepper spray to protect women. I'm quite sure it can protect men as well. Men are also vulnerable. Can you give us an update on where we are with that?

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair, if I can make a brief intervention.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: I believe this was in response to a PQ, and the response to the PQ is that we would, as a Cabinet, form a working group to look at various factors in bringing that legislation forward. That Cabinet Paper (CP) was approved and the working group will start.

Your next question was when will they be done? There's a timing in that CP; I'll message the Cabinet Secretary as he or his designate is the chair of that committee. I'll come back to you on the timing, but the Cabinet Paper was approved and their work is going to start.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you. I'm going to ask for a little bit of leeway. I want to read something here from the Constitution and just ask the Attorney General for his interpretation or his view, since it is something that he outlined earlier. This is on page 28 *[sic]* of the Constitution, under the Bill of Rights section and it deals with non-discrimination, section 16 to be exact. It reads:

"16. (1) Subject to subsections (3), (4), (5) and (6), government shall not treat any person in a discriminatory manner in respect of the rights under this Part of the Constitution. (2) In this section, "discriminatory" means affording different and unjustifiable treatment to different persons on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, age, mental or physical disability, property, birth or other status.

(3) No law or decision of any public official shall contravene this section if it has an objective and reasonable justification and is reasonably proportionate to its aim in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health."

Now subsection (4), which is the crux of what I want to ask. It says:

"(4) Subsection (1) shall not apply to any law so far as that law makes provision—

(a) for the appropriation of revenues or other funds of the Cayman Islands or for the imposition of taxation (including the levying of fees for the grants of licences);

(b) with respect to the entry into or exclusion from, or the employment, engaging in any business or profession, movement or residence within, the Cayman Islands of persons who are not Caymanian;"

What do you understand from that part of the Constitution? I know you're very familiar with it, but I just wanted to get your take on it.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you honourable member. It is pretty much self-explanatory.

The Chairman: Please explain, Honourable Attorney General. I was going to wrap that up at the end, but please explain.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: It provides the Government with wide berth, if I might put it that way. A margin of appreciation in certain undertakings, if you will, [to] craft legislation in a way that can make distinctions or preferential treatment. Especially for certain trades or in the case of immigration, the Government has the wide berth to carry out preferential treatment, say for Caymanians, without running afoul of the general discriminatory provisions in the Constitution. I always like to say that, the way that is crafted it is not meant to be a sword, it is meant to be a shield. If the Government embarks on a particular course which ended up having preferential treatment for a certain sector for Caymanians, or designating certain businesses for Caymanians, and the Government is challenged, the Government can resort to those provisions as a shield for undertaking those sort of policy decisions.

I hope I assisted you.

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

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

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central, do you want to retract the earlier statement or question?

[Laughter]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: No, not really, but I am very happy that we are getting clarity, because what is most important in this honourable House is clarity to what we're doing. By all means, I don't think that anyone would want us not to get clarity on the revenues upon which we depend for the balancing of our budget. In light of an almost \$10 million subsection of revenues coming from that area, it would only be important to examine that.

I would also like to say thank you to my colleague for highlighting that provision within the Constitution as it is quite relevant and gives the support to the Government, but the foundation of the question posed about the legality of some subsets of the revenue bunch was on the basis of — we've tried similar things before that did not hold up in court.

I know that you would recall our amazing Chief Justice before she was Chief Justice, making a ruling on things that were suggested to be discriminatory between Caymanians and non-Caymanians in respect to rights to do things — we're talking about the fishing situation. Maybe my distinction was not relevant, and apples to [oranges]—

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: No, no. That's fine.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: —but my concern was based on that. Maybe you can give some clarity.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: If you're talking about the fishing matter, I don't think it crystallised into a decision. I think what she did was make an observation, but she never made a ruling, if I recall, that it was discriminatory. She did make an observation about the propriety of it, if you will, but stopped short of saying that it was discriminatory.

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

I'll say this to the Honourable Minister of Finance and Chair, it seems as if the interpretation is that full authority is there for you to raise those necessary monies and I wish you well as a Government in that respect.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: For all of us.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Moving on to the next question.

Attorney General, you may recall that we passed some legislation in the administration where the Honourable Sir Alden McLaughlin was Premier last, and in that legislation, it had to do with the ratio of practicing attorneys within the Cayman Islands context as well as foreign context. If my memory serves me well, some of the sections of that legislation are going to be enacted soon.

There are concerns in the community that the ratios agreed to when that legislation was passed may be adjusted and not in the best interest of the Caymanian attorneys. Let me explain and you can either confirm or deny this is happening, so those Caymanian attorneys can feel more comfortable.

Basically, I don't know the exact figure, but there's a ratio within the parameters of how many non-Caymanians practicing outside of Cayman, who are not called to the bar, are in a company compared to how many [Caymanian practicing attorneys] the company has to have — hypothetically speaking, 6:1. This is an example. That's not the number, I don't recall the number off the top of my head, but maybe you do. The concern now is that there is an intention to reduce that to, hypothetically speaking, 3:1, which will obviously require fewer lawyers locally and [have] less need for Caymanian lawyers.

If that is not the case, I'd be happy to hear from you today. I've spoken with the Honourable Premier who has not had any indication of that. Are you aware of such thing? Is there any intention to do so? Can you give any clarity?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: I'm aware of the ratio, it is 1:1, and it is provided in the primary legislation. There has not been any discussion that I'm aware of to amend the law to change that ratio. Honourable member, if there was such a discussion, it would more than likely be in the Legal Services Council, of which I am a Member and is chaired by the Honourable Chief Justice. We haven't had any discussion about that. It's not on the table as far as I'm aware. As I said to you before, if it is in the primary legislation it would have to come here.

The Chairman: Any further questions on LGA 1? There are no further questions on LGA 1. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I'm requesting honourable members to vote on the following output group LGA 1 - Legal Advice and Representation in Civil Matters for the amounts of \$3,272,045 for 2026 and—

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

I do apologise, I think the Standing Orders allow me to stop you before the vote is taken officially. Something just came to mind and I would like to ask the Attorney General on this line item before we conclude.

The Chairman: Please proceed, member.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Trust me, I don't like interrupting you when you're calling for a vote, but if I don't get a chance to ask it now, I won't for another two years.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: You can ask parliamentary questions, but please proceed.

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

Through you, Mr. Chair. Attorney General, there's been a growing concern about marriages of convenience and I know the Government is trying to do its best to make amendments to the law, much of which myself and other members in the Opposition support. I'm not going to pre-empt that discussion, but there is also a growing concern about the difficulty for divorces which sometimes leave people in marriages that are not wanted. Has there been any discussion about reforming the divorce structure?

I know that sounds terrible, but it is a real thing in the immigration component of things, because the quicker you get a divorce, the quicker the rights awarded with it can be taken away.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Honourable member, thanks for the question. The truth is that there have been discussions about reforming the Marriage Act — divorces — but it is probably not in the context in which you are positing the question. What we have been looking at as it relates to divorce is what we call changing to a no-fault ground for divorces.

Where it is now, when you have divorces, you distil all the dirty linen in public, in court and all of that. The reform that we're looking at would be a more seamless approach where none of that is publicised or ventilated. It is a more dignified process if I might put it that way, where both parties can emerge from that with their reputation intact and, most importantly, children of the marriage don't have to walk around with the scars of what caused the parents to separate. That is the angle from which we're looking at it.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Attorney General. A quick follow up on that, I think that's a good thing, so I welcome that reform when it comes and look forward to seeing what

the report suggests and potentially any amendments to the law.

What I am specifically talking about are the obligations in order to get a formal divorce. Some of those things, there are also costs associated with them. I'd like to give you an example. One of my constituents wants to get a divorce and just can't afford to do so; simply put, they can't afford to pay for a lawyer.

I think that there could be some lower courts, I guess you would call them. What you call arbitrators... I'm not sure if there are other structures where persons can potentially get out of bad situations easier, because what I have been told is that it's easy to get into a marriage and hard to get out of it in Cayman. Many people are stuck inside of them, not wanting to be there. When we look at it from the immigration component, in most cases, it is troubling with a person who is non-Caymanian, who will, as the time takes longer for the divorce to happen, gets closer and closer to the opportunity of benefits which we're trying to curtail a little bit right now.

I don't know if you can give any answer to that. If not, that's fine. I'll try to figure out how to talk about it another way.

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. *I am not aware of any effort in that regard, but what I could do is have a word with the Honourable Chief Justice and the Law Reform Commission to see whether there is any scope for a more seamless process — if I understand what you're getting at. I'm happy to do that.*

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chair, I'm going to ask for your assistance because I'm about to say something right now and this is normally the part that gets me in trouble sometimes, but, you know, I can't help myself sometimes.

Through you Mr. Chairman to the Attorney General. Is there any review being done of the Marriage Act with the view of probably revoking or cancelling the licences of some marriage officers? I say that to say this, when we look at the majority of marriages, especially marriages of convenience that show up on the radar — at least speaking from my previous experience in a previous life — the majority of them [involved] the same marriage officer. At some point, someone has got to say that it cannot be a situation where all of these are literally popping up from one marriage officer, from the many that we have. From that standpoint, is there

anything being done to strengthen the legislation to revoke the licence of marriage officers? Because some people out there shouldn't be marrying some people. *[Crosstalk]*

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General, do you care to proffer a response?

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Mr. Chair and thanks to the honourable member. I was just trying to get some feedback from the Drafting Department. She thinks that there was some proposal, something is in train to tighten up the entire area as it relates to the conduct and the level of due diligence that is required of a marriage officer. She is confident that there is some work that has been done around that. *I am not privy to most of the details, but what I can do is drill down into that a bit more and provide the honourable member with some response.* There is some work being done around it as we speak.

The Chairman: Honourable Attorney General, if you could also comment on how modernised is the... Is it called the banns of wedding? The formal announcement or disclosure process. I have gotten several complaints about those simply being in churches and post offices. I had complaints around two families whose adult children were former Sunrise clients and therefore there was a question as to their true capacity to enter into a marriage.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: The complaint they had was that there was no way of them knowing; so is there any view to modernising that, given the fact that we now live in a digital age and not the age where people used to frequent places like post offices, et cetera, and therefore would see these things.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Mr. Chair and honourable member, I recall distinctly that there was some discussion around where these notices should be posted, some place that is conspicuous enough to the public. I think the Deputy Governor's Office has conduct of that. I'm going to ask whoever is acting as Deputy Governor to prepare some answers when they get here so that the Chambers can be made aware of the direction of travel as it relates to those reforms.

Hon. Michael S. Myles, Minister of Caymanian Employment & Immigration, Elected Member for Prospect: Mr. Chairman, can I add to the contributions, please?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, do you have a question?

Hon. Michael S. Myles: I just wanted to add to the contributions to the Member in terms of regulations for tightening up the loopholes on marriages of convenience. We are bringing that in terms of regulations. To add to the Attorney General's contribution, it is something that my Ministry is taking on in conjunction with the immigration reform, because we've seen it. It is killing our department at this point. It is going to be coming to Caucus and then on to Cabinet. The Attorney General's Office has been involved in guiding us on how we tighten up some of those loopholes.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister.

As there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I move that the following item on the Schedule entitled LGA 1 - Legal Advice and Representation in Civil Matters in the amounts of \$3,272,045 in 2026 and \$3,384,198 in 2027 be voted on by members.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: LGA 1 passed.

The Chairman: Thank you very much members.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Under the Appropriations to Financial Services, the Member for George Town Central had requested that my Chief Officer remain. Can I dispatch him now?

The Chairman: I would take it that those were centred around the ratios of overseas attorneys, so yes, your staff should be free to go and do some of their good work.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Thank you Chief Officer for hanging around. God bless you. Have a good evening.

The Chairman: Members of the committee, we have LGA 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and EI 34; can members give me an indication of what items you may have questions on? Otherwise...

[Crosstalk]

**BLOCK VOTE:
LGA 3, LGA 4, LGA 5, LGA 6, LGA 7**

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your cooperation, all members.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the following items up for approval in block. The question is whether honourable members approve the following items on the Schedule to form part of the Bill, namely —

- LGA 3 - Law Teaching and Publications, \$1,753,694 in 2026 and \$1,783,736 in 2027;
- LGA 4 - Drafting of Legislation and Regulations, \$1,413,462 in 2026 and \$1,525,960 in 2027;
- LGA 5 - Policy Advice and Administrative Support to the Attorney General, \$1,650,698 in 2026 and \$1,682,303 in 2027;
- LGA 6 - Financial Intelligence Services, \$2,622,047 in 2026 and \$2,784,974 in 2027; and
- LGA 7 - Review and Modernisation of Acts, \$596,196 in 2026 and \$670,834 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: LGA 3, LGA 4, LGA 5, LGA 6, and LGA 7 passed.

EI 34 - Portfolio of Legal Affairs

The Chairman: Members, EI 34 - Portfolio of Legal Affairs. *[Pause]*

Since there are no questions, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether members approve the item on the Schedule to the Bill described as EI 34 - Portfolio of Legal Affairs in the amounts of \$402,500 in 2026 and \$305,500 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EI 34 passed.

**APPROPRIATIONS TO CABINET ON BEHALF OF
THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC
PROSECUTIONS**

**DPA 1 - Prosecution and International Cooperation
EI 60 - Office of the Director of Public
Prosecutions**

The Chairman: Members, we move to Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), DPA 1 - Prosecution and International Cooperation. Are there any questions?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Honourable members, I put the question as to whether you approve on block the following items on the Schedule to form part of the Bill—

- DPA 1 - Prosecution and International Cooperation in the amounts of \$7,703,342 in 2026 and \$7,778,683 in 2027; and
- EI 60 - Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, \$152,000 in 2026 and \$100,000 in 2027,

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: DPA 1 and EI 60 passed.

**APPROPRIATIONS TO CABINET ON BEHALF OF
THE CHIEF JUSTICE**

JAD 1 - Administrative Support to the Judiciary

The Chairman: We turn to appropriations on behalf of the Chief Justice. JAD 1 - Administrative Support to the Judiciary. Are there any questions on the judiciary?

Since there are no questions on the appropriations on behalf of the Chief Justice, I move in conformity with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve all items on block on the schedule as follows—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Okay, we will move along line-by-line then, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as JAD 1 - Administrative Support to the Judiciary in the following amounts, \$3,682,222 in 2026 and \$3,698,654 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: JAD 1 passed.

BLOCK VOTE:

**JAD 2, JAD 3, JAD 4, JAD 5, HEA 8,
NGS 2, NGS 93
OE 1, OE 4, OE 43, OE 57, OE 65
EI 21, EA 145**

The Chairman: JAD 2 - Support for Court Proceedings. Are there any questions? *[Pause]*

Thank you, members. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve on block the following items on the Schedule —

- JAD 2 - Support for Court Proceedings in the amounts of \$8,628,278 in 2026 and \$8,644,022 in 2027;
- JAD 3 - Collection of Revenue, \$819,591 in 2026 and \$823,641 in 2027;
- JAD 4 - Financial Management of Court Funds, \$706,185 in 2026 and \$702,728 in 2027;
- JAD 5 - Support for the Conduct of Coroner Proceedings, \$104,046 in 2026 and \$103,366 in 2027;
- HEA 8 - Autopsies, Coroner and Other Related Services in the amounts of \$327,600 in 2026 and \$334,152 in 2027;
- NGS 2 - Legal Aid Services, \$2,971,000 in 2026 and \$3,030,420 in 2027;
- NGS 93 - Legal Services Supervisory Authority in the amounts of \$1,844,096 in 2026 and \$1,819,144 in 2027.

Other Executive Expenses

- OE 1 - Personal Emoluments for the Judiciary, \$4,576,262 in 2026 and \$4,967,815 in 2027;
- OE 4 - Judiciary Expenses, \$914,214 in 2026 and \$1,073,624 in 2027;
- OE 43 - Depreciation of Judicial Executive Assets, \$764,059 in 2026 and \$804,283 in 2027;
- OE 57 - Executive Bank Charges, \$13,022 in 2026 and \$13,000 in 2027;
- OE 65 - Court of Appeal Expenses, \$1,282,506 in 2026 and \$1,285,786 in 2027;

Equity Investment

- EI 21 - Judicial Administration, \$1,500,000 in 2026 and \$797,500 in 2027; and

Executive Asset

- EA 145 - Court House, \$1,703,000 in 2026 and \$2,806,800 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: JAD 2, JAD 3, JAD 4, JAD 5, HEA 8, NGS 2, NGS 93, OE 1, OE 4, OE 43, OE 57, OE 65, EI 21 and EA 145 passed.

The Chairman: Members, I would like to thank the Honourable Attorney General and members from the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution and the Judicial Department for attending today's session of the Finance Committee.

Attorney General.

The Attorney General, Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin: Thank you, Chair, and of course, I would like to thank all honourable members for the usual kindness and support in assisting with the appropriations. I, of course, join you in thanking the staff of the Portfolio of Legal Affairs, the Office of the DPP and the Judicial Department for their continuing hard work and professionalism. Thanks to all.

Thank you, sir.

The Chairman: Yes. Thank you very much.

[Pause]

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

ADO 2 - Services to the Parliament and its Committees

The Chairman: Thank you very much for your intervention, Mr. Saunders. We certainly have no difficulty with putting to the Committee, Appropriations to the Public Accounts Committee, ADO 2.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question that appropriations to the Public Accounts Committee described ADO 2 - Services to the Parliament and its Committees in the following amounts, \$1,420,248 in 2026 and \$1,491,263 in 2027 be approved as items on the Schedule to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: ADO 2 passed.

APPROPRIATIONS TO OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE OF THE PARLIAMENT

OBM 1 - Independent Public Complaints and Information Rights

EI 75 - Office of the Ombudsman

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the following question to members that we approve the following items on the Schedule to the Bill

- OBM 1 - Independent Public Complaints and Information Rights in the amounts of \$2,868,762 in 2026 and \$2,923,846 in 2027; and
- EI 75 - Office of the Ombudsman, \$25,000 in 2026 and \$25,000 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: OBM 1 and EI 75 passed.

[Long pause]

The Chairman: Members, just give us two minutes to confer.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Members, we suspend the proceedings in Finance Committee until 5:30.

Committee suspended at 4:54 p.m.

Committee resumed at 6:16 p.m.

The Chairman: We resume this meeting of Finance Committee, please be seated.

Thank you members for your patience as we concluded our afternoon break and got through some much necessary discussions with members. At this stage we are proceeding along, just so everyone [knows], including those in the public who have seen our schedule, we are now going to cover two Ministries — the Ministry of Social Development & Innovation and the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture & Heritage.

I know that members are in the mood for cooperation, so I would not want to curb that enthusiasm and I would welcome the Minister responsible for Social Development and Innovation, [preceding] ITI 2, to proceed with his brief comment to the Committee.

Mr. Rankine.

STATEMENT ON THE APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

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

Esteemed colleagues of Parliament and all Caymanians joining us across these Islands, good evening.

Honourable members of Finance Committee, as the Minister for Social Development & Innovation, I'm proud to present our 2026/2027 budget for my Ministry. We are at a pivotal moment in our national journey, a time when rapid population growth, global uncertainty and the rising cost of living demands that we match compassion with innovation and fiscal prudence with courage and clarity.

Mr. Chairman, this budget is not simply a ledger of numbers, it's a statement of who we are as a country and what we value: our children, our families, our older persons, our workers and the systems that support them. It advances our Government's Broad Outcomes, in particular Outcome 4 - Health and Social Development; Outcome 6 - Public Services; Outcome 7 - Good Governance & Public Safety; and additionally, through our innovation agenda, Outcome 3 - Economy.

Our Government, the National Coalition for Caymanians has pledged to govern with integrity, foresight and fiscal discipline. We are committed to being responsible problem solvers, cleaning up inherited messes, addressing issues that have been building for decades and ensuring that every dollar is spent where it is needed most and where it will have the greatest impact for Caymanians. We take seriously our duty to uphold good governance and to ensure value for money, but we are equally committed to investing where it truly matters — in our people, our communities and the systems that protect them.

Mr. Chairman, for many Caymanian families, the cost of living is not an abstract concept; it's a daily struggle. This budget forms part of the NCFC's wider commitment to address cost of living on multiple fronts. While we work as a whole Government to reduce the underlying cost of living, the Ministry of Social Development & Innovation plays a distinct and complementary role. We invest in and empower our people not through handouts, but through hand-ups — support that stabilises, protects and equips Caymanians to stand strong in a changing economy.

The Ministry of Social Development and Innovation is responsible for strengthening the social fabric of the Cayman Islands by delivering inclusive, people-focused services and advancing digital transformation across government. We work to enhance quality of life by ensuring that individuals and families have access to the support, resources, and tools they need — while

modernising government services through secure, innovative technologies that improve delivery, accountability, and long-term resilience. In short, our mandate is both social and digital: to protect people and to modernise the systems that serve them. In a Cayman that is growing faster, becoming more complex, and facing new global risks, social development and innovation are not optional extras. They are essential to our present stability and our future success. Improving the lives of Caymanians is not a "nice to have"; it is necessary if our country is to remain strong, fair, and resilient in the years to come.

Mr. Chairman, when we speak about social development, we are speaking about real lives: the child who needs protection, the family that needs support, the older person who deserves dignity and safety.

Through our Social Development Programmes and Services, the Ministry will deliver between 15,000 and 20,000 intervention services per year through the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and support approximately 1,500 to 2,000 households via the Department of Financial Assistance (DFA). However, the true measure is not the number of cases; it is the quality of care and the outcomes for those we serve. That is why child safeguarding investigations that come to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) are actioned within 24 hours of referral, why services are delivered in accordance with 100 per cent of departmental guidelines and professional practice standards, and why all work is facilitated and supervised by qualified staff.

Let me be clear, despite common misconceptions, financial assistance remains reserved for Caymanians and those caring for Caymanian dependents. The system has been revamped with clearer mandates, strengthened legislation, and better technology — including service platforms like Zendesk — to ensure that assistance is targeted, transparent, and timely. We provide support as a bridge, not a destination: hand-ups, not handouts, so that Caymanians in difficulty can recover, rebuild, and move forward.

Children are at the centre of this budget and at the heart of Broad Outcome 4 - Health and Social Development. The 2026/2027 period will see the continued implementation of the Children (Amendment) Act, 2024 and the Adoption Act, 2024, both passed in December 2024. These Acts modernise our standards in line with international best practice through various provisions, including those for the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons, streamline maintenance and residential care frameworks, and align Cayman with the HHCH 1993 Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. Regulations development is underway and commencement is expected during this budget cycle.

We will continue to support and strengthen our vital partners, including:

- The Children and Youth Services (CAYS) Foundation, which manages Frances Bodden Children's Home, Bonaventure Children's Home and Phoenix House will receive approximately \$4.35 million per year. CAYS provides 24-hour, trauma-informed residential care for boys and girls aged 12 to 18, using care plans, risk management plans, and structured programmes to help young people heal and reintegrate safely into families and communities.
- The National Children's Voluntary Organisation (NCVO), which provides foster care for children who cannot be placed in private homes, offering up to 10 placements in line with DCFS policies, and operating 24 hours per day, seven days per week.
- Rehoboth Ministries, which delivers weekly after-school care and full-day holiday camps in George Town and through this budget cycle is expected to expand offerings to North Side, keeping children safe, engaged, and supported while parents work.
- Programmes such as the Alex Panton Foundation, which provide mental health support for children and young adults up to the age of 30. The Alex Panton Foundation's Financial Assistance Programme, supported with \$100,000 in 2026 and \$150,000 in 2027, ensures that when insurance has been exhausted, young people can still receive the therapeutic support they need.

Government's role, to strengthen this network of care, ensures that resources reach those who need them most, and close the gaps that leave children and families vulnerable. That is why we also support foster parents through stipends and programming, easing financial burdens and providing stability.

At the other end of the life course, older persons remain a central focus of this budget and our legislative agenda. Our older population has grown by 27 per cent between 2021 and 2023, and more than 4,000 people are expected to reach age 65 within the next 5 years. We are acting now to prepare for this demographic reality.

We are maintaining and enhancing funding for The Pines Retirement Home, with an annual allocation of roughly \$2.7 million, to provide continuous residential nursing care for older persons in need of residential care. Services are delivered by licensed professionals under the oversight of a multidisciplinary team and in full compliance with policy and procedure standards.

Meals on Wheels will continue to deliver between 55,000 and 80,000 nutritious meals annually to older persons in need, supported by \$500,000 each

year. For many seniors, that meal is more than nutrition; it is companionship, connection, and reassurance that their country has not forgotten them.

The Council of Older Persons, now under our Ministry, will be resourced to drive implementation of the Older Persons Policy 2016–2035 and, once commenced, the Older Persons (Amendment) Act, 2024. These frameworks will strengthen safeguards against neglect and abuse, guide the development of age-friendly communities, and ensure that the voices of older persons shape policy and practice.

We will also progress reforms to the Disabilities (Solomon Webster) Act, 2016, to ensure full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society. During this budget cycle the Ministry intends to also strengthen legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act (2021 Revision) and the Youth Justice Act (2021 Revision), so that our laws reflect modern realities, protect those at risk, and support rehabilitation.

Mr. Chairman, when we invest in social development, we are not creating dependency; we are building capacity. We are giving Caymanians the tools and support they need to withstand the pressures of cost of living, to stay safe, and to build better futures for their families. That is why, under NCFC leadership, we are willing to spend where it matters — on the people and programmes that strengthen our social fabric and our long-term resilience.

Mr. Chairman, the wellbeing of our Islands depends on fairness — fairness in opportunity, fairness in treatment, and fairness in the way we protect and respect one another. In 2025, this honourable House passed the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (ASHA) — a landmark piece of legislation that affirms our national commitment to safety and dignity in workplaces and institutions. This Act creates a clear framework to ensure that instances of sexual harassment can be handled swiftly, fairly, and sensitively.

Mr. Chairman, while ASHA represents a major step forward, we are clear-eyed: equality is not achieved by legislation alone. It requires cultural change — a shift in how we treat one another, how we speak to one another, and how we stand up for what is right. Our Gender Affairs function continues to lead this work across government by advancing gender mainstreaming, reviewing policies, and integrating gender considerations into planning, budgeting, and programme delivery. This ensures that government decision-making reflects the realities, experiences, and needs of both men and women — whether in economic opportunity, health, education, safety, or leadership.

This work also aligns with our Christian values as a people — values of respect, compassion, and justice. As we are reminded, every human being is worthy of dignity and protection. Mr. Chairman, through ASHA, ongoing gender policy work, public education, and continued engagement with civil society, we are building a

Cayman that leads by example — a country where fairness is not only preached, but actively practised.

The second pillar of our Ministry's mandate — innovation — is about transforming how Government serves the people of the Cayman Islands. It is about embracing technology as a tool to deliver faster, safer, and more accessible public services, while upholding good governance, accountability, and financial prudence.

Through our Digital Services, Policy Advice and Strategy output group, the Ministry will invest approximately \$37.2 million in 2026 and \$39.2 million in 2027 to support the Ministry itself, the Computer Services Department (CSD), the Cyber Security Unit (CSU), and the Department of eGovernment. These investments directly support Broad Outcomes 3 - Economy, 6 - Public Services, and 7 - Good Governance and Public Safety.

The Computer Services Department is the digital backbone of government's IT infrastructure. It supports more than 3,500 users, and safeguards the intake of over \$800 million in government revenue through custom-built systems. CSD also maintains 99–99.9 per cent of service availability for critical systems and networks. I wish there were many other networks with that reliability. CSD will also lead the implementation of the Artificial Intelligence Policy which will start in earnest in Q1 of 2026, with the vision to responsibly harness AI to strengthen economic resilience, improve public sector productivity, and unlock new opportunities for innovation and inclusive growth—all the while upholding transparency, ethics, and public trust. The implementation includes good governance guardrails and processes for the approved use of AI-enabled tools that streamline workflows, reduce manual effort, and strengthen collaboration. This budget funding also includes support for a number of security enhancement initiatives that are necessary for the mature management of the enterprise.

Mr. Chairman, transitioning to eServices, beyond the work that eGov has done with the Department of Communications on the revamp of Gov.ky. One of the most visible and transformative achievements under our innovation portfolio is the My eID Digital Identity Programme. Over the budget cycle, we expect to issue between 3,000 and 5,000 cards per year, to Caymanians, work permit holders and permanent residents. The My eID card will provide secure proof of a person's identity, age, nationality, and immigration status to both young and old and will allow residents to authenticate online for government services. This baseline will lead to future practices such as a parent applying for school grants, or a senior renewing a licence, all online without queueing or duplicating paperwork. Through the My eID Portal, individuals will be able to manage their own information in the register and see who has accessed it, thereby strengthening privacy and trust.

Internally, my eID will allow government departments to verify data securely, accept digitally signed documents, and process requests faster, reducing the need for citizens to carry their own files from one counter to another. This is how innovation supports social development: by making it easier and more dignified for Caymanians to receive the services they are entitled to. The Department has also produced an eID App that allows qualified digital signatures to be applied to PDF documents in seconds through mobile phones, and standard PCs and Mac computers.

We are also advancing a whole-of-government approach to Cyber Security. Cyber security has now been recognised as a formal national priority within the Enterprise Risk Management Framework, underscoring that safeguarding our digital infrastructure is a government-wide responsibility. Our Ministry is proud to lead this critical strategic initiative. The Cyber Security Unit provides continuous monitoring of government systems, coordinates incident response, supports ministries and departments in understanding their risk profiles, and ensures that new systems meet the highest information security standards. As the threat landscape intensifies across the region, this work protects not only revenue and systems, but also the privacy and safety of families, children, seniors, and those most at risk in our communities.

Cyber security cannot be the work of government alone; it is a shared responsibility that underpins our reputation as a stable, well-regulated and trustworthy jurisdiction. It is rooted in partnership and public-private collaboration with regulators, utilities, financial institutions, businesses, and civil society.

Many of the professionals in the Information Technology space leading this work are Caymanians, developed through internships, retraining, and deliberate investment in nationally relevant digital skills. As we adopt artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies, these home-grown experts will form the backbone of a secure digital Cayman.

Mr. Chairman, along this trajectory the Government is facilitating the necessary work of the private sector-led Digital Transformation Strategy Task Force that is taking a deep dive into the future of tech in the Cayman Islands. They are primarily interested in how the Government will support the private sector in the adoption of AI and other emerging technologies locally. They are interested in comprehending what are the clear needs of legislation in the fields such as Cyber Security or Artificial Intelligence. Lastly, they expect that government will equip the public sector workforce with the awareness and skills to use technology effectively and responsibly and to be able to scale services.

Innovation, in this Budget, is not about chasing trends. It is about building a secure, efficient, and citizen-centred State that supports our economy, strengthens trust, and multiplies the impact of every dollar spent

on social development. Alongside this, we are implementing tools that improve productivity and collaboration across the Civil Service, and we will launch the first overarching AI policy for government. This policy will guide responsible use of AI, ensuring that while we gain efficiency and better analysis, we also protect sensitive Government data from being fed into external models. The aim is simple: let machines handle the repetitive tasks, so that civil servants can spend more time on what matters — serving our people, solving real problems, and delivering on the Broad Outcomes.

Mr. Chairman, the real power of this Ministry lies in the way social development and innovation work together. Enhanced digital systems in the Department of Children and Family Services mean that child protection cases are processed more quickly and consistently, and data can be used to identify emerging risks in communities before they escalate. Secure digital identity shortens verification for financial assistance and reduces fraud, ensuring that support reaches the Caymanians who genuinely need it. Cyber security protects sensitive data for foster children, older persons, survivors of domestic violence, and persons with disabilities, upholding confidentiality and trust. We are, in effect, modernising the way we care, at the same time as we modernise the way we govern.

Under the leadership of the NCFC, these investments are being made with careful attention to fiscal discipline. Social Development and Innovation together make up more than a third of the operational budget, clearly signalling that this Government is people-centred and future-focused. Yet every initiative — from the \$22.85 million allocated to social development programmes, to the \$37.18 million for digital services, to the hundreds of thousands supporting CAYS, The Pines, Meals on Wheels, the Crisis Centre, Hope for Today, and the Alex Panton Foundation — is grounded in evidence, clear outputs, and strict quality standards. We are not spending for the sake of appearing generous. We are investing for the sake of impact — ensuring that the Cayman Islands delivers not only more services, but better services, with greater fairness, transparency, and accountability.

In closing, honourable members, the 2026–2027 Budget for the Ministry of Social Development and Innovation is more than a document, it is a declaration of our priorities and our identity as a country. It says that Cayman's success will not be measured by profits alone, but by the wellbeing of its people. It says that progress is not only about roads, buildings, and markets, but also about inclusion, dignity, and trust. From children to seniors, from persons with disabilities to Caymanians in recovery and transition, this Budget affirms that every Caymanian deserves opportunity, security, and respect. It reflects an NCFC Government that listens, that innovates, and that acts with both compassion and discipline — cleaning up what has been neglected in the past, while building resilient systems for the future.

As Minister for Social Development and Innovation, standing alongside my Parliamentary Secretary and supported by our Chief Officer, deputy chief officers, directors and frontline staff, I am deeply proud of the work being done across this Ministry. They are the ones turning policy into progress and budgets into better lives. Through evidence-based policy, prudent financial management, and a relentless focus on people and progress, we are laying the foundations for a stronger, fairer, and more resilient Cayman — a Cayman that is caring, capable, and connected.

The work we do today ensures that our Islands will not only keep pace with a changing world but continue to shine as a beacon of stability, equity, and innovation in the Caribbean and beyond. Let us move forward with determination and unity — as one Government, under the National Coalition for Caymanians — ensuring that this Budget translates not only into outputs on paper, but into real, positive outcomes that Caymanians can feel, see, and live. May we be guided by compassion, strengthened by innovation, and united by our love for these Islands and their people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and may God bless our people and these beautiful Cayman Islands.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister.

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

ITI 2 - Social Development Programmes and Services

The Chairman: With that, I open the questioning of ITI 2 - Social Development Programmes and Services.

Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, thank you and thank you to the Minister.

Before I begin, TP 47 on page 191 [of the Plan & Estimates] establishes in 2026 for \$2,040,000 and then in 2027 for \$10,000 [*sic*], but in the Appropriation that was given to us, it is \$10,000 [*sic*] in 2026 and \$10,000 [*sic*] in 2027 — which one is the correct document?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Which TP was it?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: TP 47.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: I think that was an error. It is supposed to be \$10 million for both years.

The Chairman: It is \$10 million for both years in the Appropriation Bill, but there's an error in the budget documents.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Yes, there's an error in the budget document. It's \$10 million each year in the Appropriation Bill.

The Chairman: Okay. Member, it is \$10 million each year. That's what we will be voting on. If you look at the bottom of your Appropriation Bill, TP 47 that I'm looking at does have \$10 million proposed appropriation for both years.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair. We did recognise that and did the follow up checks, and it was incorrect in the budget document but correct in the Appropriation Bill.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. The allocation for Meals on Wheels has increased significantly — not that I object. Can the Minister explain what specific factors have driven this increase; and does the Ministry anticipate that this increased level of funding will be required on an ongoing basis?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This increased level of funding was due to rising costs of food and increased output by 30,000 more meals to be delivered over the time period.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Throughout Cayman, or specific areas?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Yeah, throughout Cayman because Meals on Wheels is all over the island.

The Chairman: Honourable Member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. The Appropriation Bill shows a decrease in allocation of ex gratia payments or benefits to the seafarers and veterans. Can the Minister explain what policy decision underpins this reduction? I have follow up questions.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second, Mr. Chair.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. This variance is due to the expected decline of persons who will be eligible for this benefit, so they expect [demand] to decline.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Can the Minister be a little bit more specific?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: People will pass on, so we expect that to happen naturally.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Is this a reduction because of individuals who are going to pass on and not due to budget cuts?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: No, because I believe that the budget cuts you speak about are approximately 20 per cent; but no, we expect there will be declines in that [demand].

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Can the Minister confirm to me that no seafarer or veteran is going to lose any benefit whatsoever because of this change?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I don't think there was ever a time when a seafarer or veteran lost a benefit; if our projections are wrong, then we go back and we ask for more funding.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: That's a no?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: They will not. It has never happened and it won't happen under my watch.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you for confirming.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, through you. The Department of Financial Services' [sic] policy — I'm sure everyone knows about it — of [a] \$3,000 per month income limit for [a] 1 to 3-person household, and then \$4,000 for 4 to 6 persons. Can the Minister establish whether there are any intentions to increase them in line with economic realities?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I can give the member assurance that we will be reviewing the policies in the early part of 2026 to ensure that it meets those economic standards, yes.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: I'm just confirming. You do intend to increase that?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: I said we do intend to review the policy to ensure that it meets those economic standards that you're talking about.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: When will this review be conducted?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Starting at the beginning of the year, Q1.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: So we will not see it in this budget?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: The first quarter of 2026.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I just want to opine a bit on that question, just for further clarity.

I do see where there is a lack of money right now. There's been much cry about how the threshold for assistance is low now and I obviously respect that the Minister has to do a review with his team and technocrats. If the review suggests an increase, is the assumption then that you would have to come back for a supplementary?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. At some point, if the review did indicate that we have to increase the threshold, then we may have to come back, yes.

We are also looking at other programmes being done by other ministries and working with them, because we expect to put people who are not working back to work; if that doesn't work, then we would have to come back and get supplementary provisions.

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

The Chairman: Any further questions on ITI 2?
Member for Red Bay, Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I assume we're doing what we've been doing all along, which is asking [questions] sort of broadly across; am I correct?

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, we have been going line by line and getting the appropriations approved best we can.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Okay. Let me start and hopefully this is the right area.

Through you, Mr. Chair, to the Minister. I can't remember if it was in Finance Committee or at some other meeting of the House, but I did ask about information on the KRAs [key result areas], I think it is — the expectations from in the Ministry in terms of assisting clients. I was told that that information wasn't here and it would be provided to me; I haven't received anything as yet. I don't know if you have any information as yet about how you're meeting your KRAs in terms of — urgent matters within two days and usual turnaround time within 10 days, that kind of thing.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, one second.

Through you, Mr. Chair. I was actually a little bit lost when he said that so I had to just check, but we are certain that that information was sent over. I mean, we will resend it, but I'm pretty sure we sent it over.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: If it was, I don't know where it went to. It didn't come to me, sir. If it could be resent, I'd be grateful.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: [Mr. Chair, I'll give the undertaking that we will have that sent to him by no later than tomorrow.](#)

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you.

The Chairman: Any further questions?
Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you.

Older persons — I recall that there was a facility, I think it was called the Older Persons Active Aging Centre, that was set up around 2019 that went by the by for various reasons. If I recall correctly, it was to specifically serve the needs of older persons, be a meeting place for them to come to and to provide special services. I was just wondering if that's a concept that could be revisited or if there's a particular reason why that concept was done away with. Also, if the Minister has any thoughts about how we can better service the needs of older persons in terms of a facility like that.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair to the member. I actually recognise what he's talking about and that is now called the Intergenerational Hub. It provides a space where we can do exactly that, but it's just now under another Ministry, the other Ministry that I have responsibility for: Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage. We have many senior activities and things going on there as well. While it may not be under this current Ministry that we're dealing with, it is a space that's available and we have many seniors who are active there.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you. If that's the case, that's good to hear, but I'm certainly under the impression that the services that were expected to be delivered are far less — in terms of what's happening now and what was originally intended. I'll be happy to speak to you offline over that.

I have one other question with regards to older persons.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you.

As you noted Minister, the needs of our aging population is increasing. I think you may have mentioned in your comments at the start, the need for more caregivers and so on. Outside of what we do with the Pines, do you have any plans or thoughts as to how we can look to increase the facilities for residential care, which as we all know will become greater and greater in the coming years?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The member is absolutely right. As I noted in my opening statement, we have an aging population that is increasing and will increase by over 4,000 over the next few years. That is certainly something that we have to look into, whether we place them in the eastern districts or elsewhere, but care homes is something that we have to take a deep dive into and see what we can get done over the next few years.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair, through you. I appreciate that response, but has any work started on that as yet or is that something you're expecting to start looking at in the New Year? I'm trying to suss out how far along we are on the path of trying to find a solution. It won't be easy, I know, and it will be expensive, but how far along are we with looking at a solution?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. This is something that is actually near and dear to me as

well, especially in the district of East End because we have property there that we are hoping to move forward on with whatever design we use, but we may end up having to go into a private sector partnership as well with it. That's something that moving forward we will be looking at and investigating in a more expedited fashion, in 2026.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you Mr. Chair and I thank the Minister for that. What I'm understanding is that the work is yet to really start in earnest on that, correct?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: To start in earnest, yes, but we have had some discussions in the Ministry over the last year.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you. One more item, if that falls into this area. The anti-gang policy or youth at risk, would that fall to you, sir?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second Mr. Chair.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair to the Member. We don't currently have that responsibility under us, but we certainly would work with whichever Ministry or which other entity that would have it.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you. I'll look to find out who has responsibility for that and [when] that particular Minister is here, then I'll ask questions about that. That's all I have, sir. Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any further questions?
Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if the Honourable Minister could share what, if any, are the social development programmes on Cayman Brac in particular.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Give me a second Mr. Chair.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, to the member. The current social development programme

we have going on is the upgrade to the care home, the Kirkconnell Centre. When we start renovating it will have improved safety for staff and residents, integrated infrastructure, fire suppression system, and compliance with current building codes. We have to do quite a bit of upgrades and also put in a standby generator. Again, it does not have a sprinkler system installed and it exposes the residents and staff to heightened fire risks and that's why we have to do those upgrades.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac, continuing.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Are we still leasing this property or do we now have freehold ownership?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: In my last meeting with the NPO [Non-profit organisation] that was responsible for it, there is still a nominal lease on that property with the government.

Just to add to that Mr. Chair, the NPO is working with us to ensure that they deliver the services that we need, especially on the upgrades.

The Chairman: Are any further questions on ITI 2?
Mr. Tatum.

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

Returning to the Intergenerational Hub, if you could provide me in writing with the number of clients now being serviced, maybe the average number on a monthly basis as well, and the services offered there, I'd be grateful. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, [I will get that information and share with you](#). We do several programmes through our other Ministry — health and wellness programmes and that sort [of thing], yeah. It's open to any other entity that wants to use it as well for those programmes.

The Chairman: Since there are no further questions on ITI 2, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I request honourable members to vote as to whether to add ITI 2 - Social Development Programmes and Services in the amounts of \$22,855,083 in 2026 and \$23,378,886 in 2027 to the Schedule that forms part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: ITI 2 passed.

ITI 3 - Digital Services, Strategy and Business Investment Services

The Chairman: ITI 3 - Digital Services, Strategy and Business Investment Services.

Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, sir, through you. I know what you have in the notes you've circulated, but could you maybe just give a summary of your vision for where the eID will be going eventually?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. My vision in terms of where I see the eID going is that—

1. It would be an identification mechanism for one, so we can identify a Caymanian from anyone else.
2. It will make doing business with government and other entities much easier.

We will also be supported through the computer services [department] in ensuring that all of the departments... as I said in my notes earlier, instead of people walking around with one set of documents from one department, to the next, to the next, we'll be able to do it using the eID.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, sir. No complaints from me about that, sir. I could make a suggestion which is that in terms of the next rollout (I think you had an initial rollout with civil servants to test it) it could be a good idea for you to see if there are parliamentarians who would want to also be involved with the rollout as well, so that we can also see and understand how well it's working or not.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair. I'm actually glad the member said that. I will ask my team to work with all of the parliamentarians in here today and get information from them so we can start that process.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chair, I'm happy to volunteer myself.

The other request sir — I know we discussed this, but you were getting ready to come into Parliament — is to find some time as soon as practical to give parliamentarians who are interested a tour of the of the facility there. I forget what it's called, but you know the facility that we had discussed, so if that could be available that would be good.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. We tried to schedule it before, but we'll work with the members on the other side to ensure that we can schedule a time that's appropriate for them.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: If I could ask the Minister just to remind me the name of the facility. I couldn't remember the name of it. Just so people will know.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Oh, yes, the office of eGovernment in Camana Bay. I thought you were asking about the Intergenerational Hub, sorry.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to say that Mr. Brown did reach out to us and we agreed that we would wait until after the budget and we would organise a day. They did reach out to us.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.
Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to take this opportunity to say good night to all the amazing staff in your Ministry. I had the pleasure of working with them for four months and it was probably the best four months of the four years that I was a Minister.

I want to say also, that facility which was just requested to be toured is a very amazing one with some great staff members. I think it should have been a little bit bigger because they're a bit squeezed together, but we work with the support that we have. I'm looking forward to going there with my colleagues so they can see all the amazing things that I heard. I support the Minister and his continued efforts to follow the vision that was started even under the current Premier led by the staff to develop this new way forward.

With all that being said, I think one of the biggest questions out there is about the obligation of the ID, mandatory or not, for Caymanians or for non-Caymanians. I've heard people speak about the UK bringing forward a policy in 2029 where they have announced that they plan to introduce a new mandatory digital ID scheme for the purposes of providing right to work. I think that it's a great opportunity to clarify the government's position, since obviously what they do there is not necessarily what we do here — but to give the country a vision of what we're trying to accomplish with this National eID, which is going to be beneficial to our society, and clarifying those concerns for people who may have worries.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I had a quiet chat with the member earlier. I said, if it was me,

me talking as Isaac Rankine, I would make it mandatory, but at this point in time, it's not mandatory with the government.

The Chairman: Member for George Town Central, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, sir. If you can clarify: not mandatory for Caymanians, or not mandatory period, or is there a possibility it could be mandatory for work permit holders because we did say earlier that the National ID for work permit holders is coming back. I'm not sure if you've discussed that by way of policy or not.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for that question because certainly I think it's required now that all work permit holders should have some sort of ID and we will make this one mandatory for them as well, at least for the work permit holders. I think by law they are required to have an ID.

The Chairman: There are no further questions on ITI 3. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as ITI 3 - Digital Services, Strategy and Business Investment Services in the amounts of \$37,185,288 in 2026 and \$39,201,969 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: ITI 3 passed.

CAY 2 - Children and Youth Services Foundation

The Chairman: CAY 2 - Children and Youth Services Foundation, better known as CAYS Foundation. This item is open to questions.

Member for George Town Central, followed by Member for Bodden Town West.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This question can be tied in together with NGS 67 and it's merely a request to the Minister.

Again, I thank the government for following through with the completion of the George Town Central Park, something I worked really, really hard on, which offers a youth centre and a senior centre. I would encourage that the entity take advantage of that facility

as much as possible because without the proper activities there — the park will not be a park without life, without human beings participating in positive activities. The government spent much money on it and I think it's needed, so I would encourage [everyone] to use up the space.

It's a beautiful park, it's almost done, and these kids could also take advantage of the green space. We'll have a whole youth centre open practically seven days per week, free to organisations and departments such as this. If you see where NGS 67 talks about community programmes after school, I would ask the department — I know the department is fully aware of what my dream and vision was of using this facility as much as possible so it becomes a positive location.

I want to put that on record today to encourage the department, through you Minister, to take advantage of that facility. Let's bring that park to life. Thank you.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I just want to let the Member know, I have been thinking two or three steps ahead of him. It's been an amazing process seeing how the park has developed over the last seven months, and I really and truly believe it will make a positive impact on our youth, the programmes that we can do there for the older persons and everyone else in between. I think is a really great space, a well-designed facility and it is going to be good for the community with all the programmes that we can do there.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, Mr. Saunders.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Honourable Minister. This time I'm going to be very careful because of the role that organisation plays in our community. I'm going to ask a very broad question: what is happening at that place? Give me your honest feedback; this is the forum for it.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I certainly believe — and I'm saying this at the risk of [not] having spoken with any of my other staff members yet. I believe we need to have a holistic review of the programmes and the whole [operation] running there so that we can understand what's happening, because we can only improve whatever services and programmes that we are doing there. We have to do that deep dive. Hopefully, over the next few months, we'll take a look at it. I've heard many concerns coming from the community and many other members in this forum.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Honourable Minister. Through you, Mr. Chairman, can I continue, sir?

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I'm looking at page 432 of the Ownership Agreement and it speaks about developing and delivering specific programmes to address the challenging behaviours. What kind of programme? I can tell you Minister, I understand that the person who is in charge of that organisation has taken off on vacation, so I know you're quite limited in terms of what you can respond [to].

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. That is correct. The manager is off on vacation, but his deputy is here and we can get the answers that you need.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: But you see, it's the manager who I want.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, just give me a little bit of a leeway here. Public servants need to understand that we do two-year budgets and there's a time when every single one of us as MPs and everyone else park our calendar, knowing to set aside time for budgets. You cannot have people who are involved in certain activities this time of year, just taking off. One Chief Officer used to do that a lot, but I know the Minister got rid of him. You know what I mean? Everybody inside here knows who I'm talking about.

This is the kind of thing that needs to stop, because I can tell you right now, there are some serious issues at the CAYS Foundation that I'm concerned with and because of the sensitivity... I'm going to tell you right now in as clear a language as I can — Minister, the manager needs to go.

I don't like getting into personal issues. The reason why I'm raising this, colleagues, is that... I'm going to put it through as a question. What is the staff complement of the CAYS Foundation?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second, let me check my notes, sir.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chair, to the Member for Bodden Town West, the total staff count at this point is 51 staff members.

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

Through you, Mr. Chairman, to the Honourable Minister. Of those 51, how many are Caymanians?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, there are 19 Caymanians.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. The reason I raised that issue is, we are talking about at-risk kids and we also have to factor in certain cultural differences. My question to you, Honourable Minister, recognising the important role that the CAYS Foundation plays, where is the Caymanian culture in that organisation for our Caymanian kids?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I can see what the member is asking, but certainly I will pre-empt — probably his next question, hopefully — that it is my goal to ensure that every vacant space in every Ministry or entity that we have, as we transition when people come to the end of their contract that we replace them with Caymanians. I can make no other excuse for that, we have to put Caymanians in these places.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

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

Mr. Chairman through you to the Honourable Minister, and this is for colleagues in general. We have an issue in this country. Whether it be our at-risk youth, whether it be our prisoners in Northward or even the very police, there is a dominant culture within our protective services that is predominantly non-Caymanian. There is a serious mismatch forming in our society, from the police force to the lawyers who prosecute them, you name it — the entire gamut is majority non-Caymanian. This is something I am begging the government to deal with.

When you have different cultures dealing with our kids — last year, I had to drive past the Frances Bodden Girls' Home and I saw this big old board out there. I came to find out that a window or a door got kicked out. I remember trying to get some idea of what really happened and it brought home the challenges of what we have. We need to make sure that we have the right people with a certain culture and a certain sensitivity there for our young kids, because it is becoming a challenge.

Minister, I'm really and truly hoping, because right now there's some *friend-friend* thing going on in that organisation where people start bringing their friends from different countries and they're sitting down there doing absolutely nothing. I'm afraid to ask some of the things I want to ask and I'm afraid to say some of the things I want to say, because there are still some good people down there who are really doing good work.

I'll get back to one question. Mr. Chairman, you'll like this one too. How many casual workers do they employ at the Frances Bodden Girls' Home?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. They employ a total of 16 casual workers, of which 12 are Caymanian.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay now. This is where it gets nice now, Mr. Chairman. You will like this part. Those other casual workers, where are they employed full-time?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's okay. You don't know the answer, but I'll tell you. Some of them are actually employed in government. Minister, you can figure out where they're employed. You can pick. You have two ministries, you can decide which one of the ministries I'm talking about. When that person leaves at two o'clock in the morning and then they have to go to their full-time government job of taking care of children — a hint as to where I'm going... No, I'll say it. Some of them are teachers. When you work until two o'clock in the morning and then you have to wake up at six o'clock to go and teach, realistically, what kind of quality teaching can you expect with someone who is basically running on four hours' worth of sleep?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I hear the member and this is new information that I'm learning. It has certainly given us food for thought. I'll have to sit down with my team and definitely do some deep diving.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, I'll make this easy. We need to have a conversation offline with this, but I need to put it out there so you can understand the issues that I'm having. Like I said, I want to be very careful, but this is something I'm really passionate about. We'll take it offline.

The Chairman: Mr. Saunders, Member for Bodden Town West. Let me be very clear about how I see the role of the Finance Committee. For too long, this Parliament takes things offline and nothing changes. The lady Member for Cayman Brac East will know what my view was on this. We sit here with very few standing committees. We don't have a National Security Committee of this Parliament.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: There are powerful areas of this country. All we have to do is look at modern countries and how they govern themselves, how parliaments operate, and we see that this Parliament continues to operate in

the dark ages, where we get once per year with Finance Committee to actually air and ensure that the public get a view into how their monies are being spent and how the government is run.

I would much prefer if you ask the questions in the light of day. Of course, it's up to you.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, the reason why I'm taking a very cautious approach is that my questions are personal in nature. I expect the government of the day will take action, and what I don't want to do is provide an out that if an employee is dismissed it is not because of political pressure or this, or that, or whatever. I'm trying to be very careful in that regard. I do understand exactly where you're coming from and I agree.

Then the other issue, the sensitivity of the area that they deal with. There are some things I want to mention, but understanding what we are dealing with here and the children at risk, I would prefer there are some things... Mr. Chairman, you know me, I'm always the first to put it out there, so if you see me exercising some kind of restraint, you must know there's a reason for it.

The Chairman: Members, I can only trust your judgment. I can't force any member to ask questions. In fact, most people would say that my job is to get us through this committee process as expeditiously as possible.

Having said that, the information that you have provided, in my opinion, is not [personal] because you've not called any names in particular, you mentioned people who may be working until 2 a.m. — that is policy. If what you have described is accurate, I will be the first to say it is poor policy and I sure hope that when I get to the Ministry of Education tomorrow, I am not told that anyone has been signed off as being approved to work under the conditions you have described, good member, and then going into classrooms to teach our children. I'll leave it at that.

Governance is about good policy and that was a policy position that I heard you mention, not personal. That's just my view, but I'm in the hands of members. Are there any further questions?

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, well, I'll move on to another section in that area.

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. Does the CAYS Foundation fall under the Public Authorities Act?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. CAYS is in essence a government-owned company, so it falls under the Public Authorities Act.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, thank you very much. Similar to other government agencies where

there was a harmonisation of salaries and benefits, was that exercise also conducted at the CAYS Foundation?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I am not aware of that but if you just give me a second, let me just check and confirm with my staff.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, I just got some clarity on that, they are on the CIG salary scale.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: And their benefits?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second, Mr. Chair.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, the staff are on the Public Service Pension Plan and they are on CINICO, but some of the funding that we proposed in this budget will put their dependents on that insurance scheme as well.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and I welcome that response. I understand that for some employees there is an issue with their dependents.

Through you Mr. Chairman to the Honourable Minister. Turning to page 457 of the Ownership Agreement, Donations which is note 19 of your financial statements— Donations in Kind in 2024 was \$259,426; donations in kind for 2025 is \$11,309; and then there's nothing forecasted for 2026 and 2027. In a nutshell, [an] in-kind donation of \$259,426 in 2024, to \$11,300, to basically nothing being budgeted. Then, Donations - General for 2025 is forecasted to be \$80,662 and nothing is forecasted [for 2026 and 2027].

I'm asking the question in the light of understanding that someone was hired to basically go out and assist with these kinds of things and raise donations. Going from \$259,000, down to \$11,300, to nothing being forecasted — this person who was hired to do that, what exactly are they doing?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to ask the acting manager to come and answer this question.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, I have the acting manager, if you can just allow her to answer the question.

Ms. Nyasha Reid, Senior Manager - Operations, CAYS Foundation: Nyasha Reid, Senior Manager - Operations, CAYS Foundation. Regarding the member's question on donations, through you Chair, the figure in 2024 was driven by fundraising that we did to supply a cottage renovation that happened at the Bonaventure campus. We had a lot of in-kind donations solicited from community partners to renovate a space on campus to create a specific two-bed facility that was in line with our vision for the future in terms of the quality of infrastructure, et cetera.

Similarly for 2025, in the last quarter of the year, we have now begun renovations on the Boys' annex at Frances Bodden and you'll see an increase again for in-kind donations for that particular project.

We hope to continue soliciting donations for the upcoming fiscal year as well because our goal is to renovate all our infrastructure to be in line with modern standards in residential care, and much of that is driven by partnerships with the community, with in-kind support, with people donating their time and efforts and materials.

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

Through you to the senior manager. What forecasted donations in kind are you looking for in 2026 and 2027?

Ms. Nyasha Reid, Senior Manager-Operations, CAYS Foundation: In 2026 and 2027, we'll be again focusing on infrastructure development. They are quite expensive projects. For example, we're looking to renovate Phoenix House which is our secure facility at Bonaventure campus and the estimated cost for that is \$500,000. Overall, the estimated budget, not counting Phoenix House, is roughly \$2.6 million for renovating Bonaventure and Frances Bodden to the standard that we'd like to see.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay, thank you very much.

Continuing back to the Minister, Mr. Chairman. This is my last question for now, in case others may have questions. In terms of some of the staff that you have brought in from overseas, has anyone gone through and checked their qualifications to see if what they say they have, they really have?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. CAYS again is an SAGC and staffing wouldn't necessarily be under my remit but under the board and the chairman. I would ask if you'd allow the senior manager to answer.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

Ms. Nyasha Reid, Senior Manager-Operations, CAYS Foundation: Through you, Mr. Chair, to answer the member's question. I believe the question is what vetting of qualifications is done. I can speak to our typical HR practice, which is whenever we do recruitment, applicants complete an employment application form, submit a resume and then also have to submit supporting documentation. This is all checked before we proceed with any job offer. Anyone in positions would have to show proof that they do hold the qualifications that they say on their CV. Whether it's certified copies of diplomas, et cetera, those are all provided.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West, continuing.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman that's fine. I realised I have the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee here to my right, so we can always deep dive into some of the more pertinent issues at the PAC level.

A last request from me, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Honourable Minister, can you send me their policy and procedures manual, as well as a list of the specific programmes that the foundation is actually working on?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, [I will endeavour to get that policy to the member as soon as I can.](#)

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Yeah, the list of programmes and then the policy and procedures manual.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No other stuff. I will speak to my chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and we can look at the qualifications issue.

The Chairman: Noted.

Any further questions on CAY 2? [Pause] Any further questions on CAY 2? If not, in accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as CAY 2 - Children and Youth Services Foundation in the amounts of \$4,350,000 in 2026 and \$4,350,000 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: CAY 2 passed.

NGS 64 - Care of the Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons

The Chairman: NGS 64 - Care of the Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons. Are there any questions? *[Pause]* If there are no questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question that honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as NGS 64 - Care of the Indigent and Disabled Elderly Persons in the amounts of \$2,756,989 in 2026 and \$2,756,989 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 64 passed.

**BLOCK VOTE:
NGS 66, NGS 67, NGS 71**

The Chairman: NGS 66 - Foster Care for Children.

Members, just by way of indication, that way we could take a block vote. Are there any questions on NGS 67, NGS 71, NGS 86 or NGS 87?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question to honourable members to approve the following items on the Schedule described as—

- NGS 66 - Foster Care for Children, \$770,000 in 2026 and \$770,000 in 2027;
- NGS 66 *[sic]* - Community Programmes - Afterschool, \$165,000 in 2026 and \$165,000 in 2027;
- NGS 71 - Support For Persons Experiencing Domestic Abuse, \$600,000 in 2026 and \$600,000 in 2027

to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 66, NGS 67 and NGS 71 passed.

NGS 86 - Community Programmes - Meals on Wheels

The Chairman: NGS 86 - Community Programmes - Meals on Wheels. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I move that NGS 86 - Community Programmes - Meals

on Wheels be approved on the Schedule in the amounts of \$500,000 in 2026 and \$500,000 in 2027 to form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 86 passed.

NGS 87 - Gender Equality Cayman

The Chairman: NGS 87 - Gender Equality Cayman. Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Honourable Minister, I note in the auxiliary notes it intimated that the funding was to conduct a national survey about diversity. Can the Minister elucidate a bit further as to exactly what this survey hoped to achieve and whether or not there is funding in the budget to carry out the results of the survey.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Give me a minute, Mr. Chair.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, to the Member for Cayman Brac East. After consulting with the team, this is actually used to support a survey through the Gender Equality NPO. They use the results to see the movement through the workforce of the genders — how well they're moving, who gets promoted more, type thing. The NPO carries out the survey and they send the results to government and this is our contribution to that survey.

The Chairman: Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. This is a one-off funding, is that correct?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, from my understanding it has been done on three other occasions before, but it's a one-time payment each year.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wasn't really planning to ask any more for several reasons, but seeing that the Honourable Minister indicated that this is the third payment, can I take it that they are in possession of at least two results from

this survey? If so, what has been done to show value for money with the results?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Just to give some correction, I think I said it is done every year, but it's a survey that's done every two years. The results are then given to us and it will help us form any policy as it relates to gender in the workplace. The entity also publishes those results.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just curious, what was the name of the entity?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: The name of the NPO is Gender Equality Cayman.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you.

The Chairman: Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. Let me confirm, you don't have any results or any reports pertaining to this. Is that correct? It's only on the website, so you were not produced any results at all?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. While it's a fairly new subject for myself, I understand that the results of the three surveys that were completed have been received by the Ministry.

The Chairman: Member for George Town West, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Through you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Are you able to share the results with us, please?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, we can, but like I said before, the results are also published. It's public information.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Whichever is easier for you, sir.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Okay.

The Chairman: Minister, can you give an indication of where the members can find the results?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: [I will undertake to get the information to the member.](#)

The Chairman: Is there a website?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: I will provide all the pertinent information, but it is genderequalitycayman.ky. I will send a link and I will also send the reports.

The Chairman: genderequalitycayman.ky?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: That is correct, Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Are there any further questions? If there are no further questions—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I was trying my best to stay out at this one because it seems a little bit sensitive, but you know me, I'm the one who always asks the difficult questions.

Here's what the concern is and I think the Minister could just be straightforward about it. Gender equality in Cayman, there are obviously some concerns in the terminology in light of global circumstances in respect to what is defined as gender. Are we talking about the equality for women in a world where men run it and women are not treated right? Are we talking about persons changing their sexual categorisation? Because members — I know, I'm the one who says all the bad stuff — have uncomfortable feelings about that, so the clarity is needed if this is investigating those types of things before members vote for this, for \$14,000 of the taxpayer money.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. As far as I'm aware, as far as I believe everyone else is aware, I only know about two genders in Cayman — male and female. I just consulted with the person and it's related to the male and female issues. No other genders in Cayman, sir; none.

The Chairman: Member, continuing.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Minister for that answer. In any event, just be mindful that we are still a Christian nation upon which we have our belief systems and these things can easily be [misconstrued]. Be mindful as you proceed, and I just asked so it doesn't catch you off guard, because I've seen many times with Ministers where things sneak into their ministries and

into their curriculum and all kinds of other things. Obviously I know, I'm trying to be as sensitive as I can be, but I don't want it to be something that sneaks up on you, my brother. Please be cautious, yeah?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, I would give the member the assurance that I support the statement he made in that we are a Christian society. I am not going to support anything other than the male and female genders in subject matters that fall under my area.

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Thank you very much.
Lady Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, thank you. Through you, can the Minister confirm the website for me, please, one more time?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, it's genderequalitycayman.ky. I will send it to the member in writing, I will send out the reports in writing, so she doesn't have to worry.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Yeah, because I don't see it exists. Thank you.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Members, a website has been circulated that seems to be embedded in LinkedIn. It's embedded in ky.linkedin.com. Are members ready to vote on this item or are there further questions? The Minister has given an undertaking to get a result of the surveys and circulate them to members.

Member for George Town West, I'm not going to curtail the rights of yours or any members; if you have more questions, please feel free.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, thank you. I'm sorry to be a pain to the Minister, but are you telling the country that we don't have the resources in government to establish something regarding gender equality?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. What I'm saying to this Committee—

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I just have to apologise because I had to catch my breath, I didn't want to answer the question with what came in my head immediately. You wouldn't have liked the answer, I'm sorry.

Anyway sir, through you Mr. Chair. We are setting up the Gender Affairs Unit that would encompass the management of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act, but this \$14,000 is a portion of what the survey cost. We give a contribution to it. We don't have staff that we could use to sit down to do a \$14,000 contribution survey.

The Chairman: Are there any further questions?
[Pause] Since there are no further questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as NGS 87 - Gender Equality Cayman in the amounts of \$14,000 in 2026 and 14,000 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NGS 87 passed.

TP 41 - Financial Assistance

The Chairman: TP 41 - Financial Assistance.
Honourable Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Can we ask for a division, please?

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Members, can you assist the Chair? It's nigh on 8pm. I've been requested to have a division on the previous vote?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr. Chair.

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

The Chairman: Sadly, I had moved on and approved it to be part of the Schedule and I had already read out TP 41. However, for the benefit of members and the listening audience, I did not hear any Noes, so I took that to be a unanimous approval.

TP 41 - Financial Assistance. As there are no questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3)—

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to ask one

question real quick that kind of covers both areas, TP 47 as well, because I think we're getting to that point where we may be offering a block vote approach; at least from my side of things.

Can the Minister say if there's any intention of raising the Seafarers Ex-gratia payments in light of the unfortunate inflation rate? As little as it may be, it is something and the costs aren't going down. This is a two-year budget, is there any consideration over the next two years to have an increase for the seafarers' increments — yes or no?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. Right at this point we don't have any consideration of raising it, but certainly if economic conditions warrant it and we have the funding, I'm sure that my colleagues will consider it.

The Chairman: Excellent answer Minister.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: I was intending to put a block vote because I heard no dissension to the suggestion.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: To the remainder of the Schedule, yes.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Excellent. Your consideration, members, is greatly appreciated by the Chair and the Committee.

BLOCK VOTE: TP 41, TP 47, TP 57, TP 115, TP 123

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the following items on the Schedule described as—

- TP 41 - Financial Assistance, \$24,000,000 in 2026 and \$24,000,000 in 2027;
- TP 47 - Ex-Gratia Benefit Payments to Seafarers and Veterans, \$10,000,000 in 2026 and \$10,000,000 in 2027;
- TP 57 - Children and Family Services Support, \$521,150 in 2026 and \$521,150 in 2027;

- TP 115 - Hope for Today Foundation, \$100,000 in 2026 and \$100,000 in 2027;
- TP 123 - Support for Community Development and Activities, \$250,000 in 2026 and \$250,000 in 2027

to form part of the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 41, TP 47, TP 57, TP 115 and TP 123 passed.

TP 129 - Alex Panton Foundation Financial Assistance Programme

The Chairman: TP 129 - Alex Panton Foundation Financial Assistance Programme. Are there any questions?

Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

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

Mr. Chairman, let me just say first and foremost that I fully support this vote. My question is along the line of 2027 having \$150,000, while 2026 merely has \$100,000. I wonder whether there would be any consideration to equalise the vote. Obviously, I don't have the power to increase it, but if the Minister could find \$50,000 somewhere to bring it up. There's so much stress amongst our young people, \$100,000 doesn't go very far.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second while I consult with my team, sir.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The member raises a very important concern and I think that's a concern that sits with everyone in this House, about the mental health of our youth. I am sure that if we need to increase that we can get the support of our colleagues, but we will certainly look at our other votes that we are not using as fast, if you want to say that, and shift money around if we need to.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Mr. Chairman, without being presumptuous, perhaps the Minister, if he turns to page 24 there's at least one vote there that he can take off \$50,000 and he wouldn't even feel it — McKeever would say, quehey!

[Crosstalk]

[Pause]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Amendment to TP 129

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. After a bit of consideration and discussion with the staff and the Premier, we'd like to move an amendment to shift some money [in] financial year 2026, from TP 130 to TP 129 [of] \$50,000 to make it \$150,000 and make the two years equal.

[Desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: You behave yourself.

The Chairman: Members, I therefore move a motion that TP 129 be increased to \$150,000 and TP 130 be reduced to \$200,000 having a net neutral effect on the overall Appropriation Bill; and that that Motion be allowed to be conducted at this stage in the Committee. The Minister will sign a written motion before we conclude the proceedings of the Committee.

TP 129 be increased by \$50,000 in 2026 to \$150,000 and TP 130 be reduced to \$200,000.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: For clarity—

The Chairman: Minister, I have just given the motion, can you move it, please?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, I move a motion to reduce TP 130 by \$50,000 in 2026 and increase TP 129 by \$50,000 to make it \$150,000 for 2026.

The Chairman: Members, there's a motion on the Floor of the Committee.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Amendment to TP 129 passed.

The Chairman: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I move that TP 129 be approved as an item on the Schedule to the Bill. It's described as Alex Panton Foundation Financial Assistance Programme in the amount of \$150,000 in 2026 and \$150,000 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 129, as amended, passed.

TP 130 – Innovation and Research Support

The Chairman: TP 130. In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question to honourable members to approve the item on the Schedule described as TP 130 - Innovation and Research Support in the amounts \$200,000 in 2026 and \$250,000 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 130 passed.

TP 131 - Social Support Programme for Seniors and Children

The Chairman: TP 131. As there are no questions, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question to honourable members that TP 131 - Social Support Programme for Seniors and Children in the amounts as follows, \$500,000 in 2026 and \$500,000 in 2027, appear as an approved item on the Schedule to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: TP 131 passed.

EI 78 - Ministry of Social Development and Innovation

The Chairman: EI 78 - Ministry of Social Development and Innovation.

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. In the spirit of it being the last line item for the evening and wanting to let our amazing staff get home to their families, I quickly—

An Hon. Member: We have Sports, Youth and Culture to do.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Oh Jesus, Lord.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Member, I like the way you're heading.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Are we saying that we're going to have this, plus a block vote for the next?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, you see, I was never in charge of sports. My relationship was with social development. Anyway, the point I'm getting at is that I see that there is \$5 million for 2026 and only \$2.2 million for 2027. Just trying to understand the reason why there's a major difference; not disputing the amount, but there has to be a rationale.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, some of this is capital work for the Kirkconnell Care Centre and that will be completed next year, so that wouldn't go over into 2027. Also, much of our CapEx cost on the CSD side has now turned into operational because of the nature of the subscriptions.

The Chairman: Excellent.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the item on the Schedule described as EI 78 - Ministry of Social Development and Innovation in the amount of \$5,061,240 in 2026 and \$2,289,240 in 2027 to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: EI 78 passed.

The Chairman: Members, that concludes the appropriations to the Minister responsible for Social Development and Innovation.

Minister, I presume there's a portion of your staff that you would like to thank and, as the old people would say, cut loose.

[Laughter]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, thank you so much.

Mr. Chair, yes, absolutely. I want to thank this fantastic group of people you see sitting in the back here. They have done a wonderful job and they've continued to do a wonderful job on behalf of the people of this country. You heard me earlier say in the statement, for example, how much revenue CSD defends for this country. I want to thank each and every single one you see sitting here behind me; Ms. Nellie, the DCOs, all the other staff members, the directors — I don't remember everybody's names, please forgive me, but I mean every single person sitting back there. While it's debatable on who is the A team, we are the A-plus team.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, I just want to, on behalf of the Official Opposition, share the same sentiments and we wish them well in the great service they award the people of the Cayman Islands.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: It would be remiss of me, Mr. Chair, if I didn't also thank — we joked about it earlier — the previous Minister for the work that he did in that four months, because obviously he is very passionate about some of the areas that were in there. Thank you, sir.

The Chairman: Thank you. Thank you to the staff.

Now, we turn to the Appropriations to the Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, who is the same Minister.

[Long pause]

The Chairman: Members, I think I have been more than accommodating and lenient as Chair. We have a schedule and we have four ministries to go. Whilst I know the hour has gotten to 8:21 p.m. I think we need to give it a go at this Ministry. I think with cooperation and with concise questions, you would be amazed what we can achieve as a Committee. I think this has been the A committee. I heard about the A team, but this has been the A-plus committee. I am very confident that once the Minister has given his statement that members will find that we can get through the questions and be able to do the work of our people.

Honourable Minister, YSC 1 - Advice and Support to the Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

STATEMENT ON APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR YOUTH, SPORTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before that, I'll read a statement for this Ministry.

Mr. Chair, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage plays an important role in shaping a future where every [young] mind is empowered with opportunity; sports is inclusive and the base for an active and healthy lifestyle; and every cultural expression celebrates the spirit of what it means to be Caymanian.

As the Ministry responsible for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, we have worked diligently to ensure that all subjects under the ambit of this Ministry is all-encompassing, strategically aligned and meets the needs of our country. In doing so, we have tasked ourselves to make certain that our young people are supported; sports whether competitive or recreational are accessible; and we have embarked on reviewing policies and legislation to institutionalise culture and heritage in the Cayman Islands, for generations to come.

The Ministry has also established key priorities which are as follows:

1. Talent Identification and Development;
2. Enhancement and Empowerment of Youth;
3. Awareness and Preservation of Culture & Heritage; and
4. Promoting an Active and Healthy Lifestyle for All.

Mr. Chair, I hope you know that I said “4. Promoting an active and healthy lifestyle for all” including all of the Members in this Chamber right now.

These priorities will be achieved through the provision of policy advice, administrative services, governance support and the delivery of a range of programmes and services to the public, all while upholding good governance through transparency and accountability.

In addition to the core administrative duties of the Ministry, the Departments, Units and Statutory Authorities and Government Entities, included in the Ministries remit are: The Youth Services Unit, The Department of Sports, the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, Cayman Islands National Museum and Cayman National Cultural Foundation. Together, all entities form a vital framework dedicated to youth empowerment, recreational and athletic physical development, cultural and heritage preservation, awareness and institutionalisation across our Islands.

Mr. Chair, we are invested in empowering our young people and in doing so the Youth Services Unit works with young people, communities, other Government and non-Government agencies to empower young men and women so that they can realise their full potential as model citizens, contribute to national development in all its forms, and ensure the sustainability of the future of the Cayman Islands.

We re-established the National Youth Commission, introducing a transparent Expression of Interest process to ensure inclusivity and accountability in selecting its members. The Commission is diligently working to be a strong voice for our young people, shaping

policy and supporting youth across our Islands. This demonstrates our partnership with the civil service, civil society, because true progress is built on collaboration.

The Youth Empowerment Symposium, is now an annual event, empowering young Caymanians through leadership and personal development. Our CARICOM Youth Ambassador Programme was revitalised, and I am proud to note that in 2024, Caymanian Ambassador Vanessa Burke from the district of West Bay made history as the first Caymanian to serve as Dean of the Regional Programme. These initiatives celebrate the talent, resilience, and excellence within our young people.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: We have enhanced the National Sports Commission, providing stronger governance and strategy to elevate Caymanian athletics. In addition, we continued to provide funding annually to our existing eight core [focus] sports in Athletics, Basketball, Cricket, Football, Netball, Squash, Swimming and Volleyball, and to the Cayman Islands Olympic Committee. It is also common for the Ministry to provide grants to sporting associations, clubs and athletes.

The Department of Sports provides technical assistance where necessary to the focus sports, provides guidance on sport policy matters, monitors the development of sports and provides support services for various stakeholders including schools, sports clubs, communities and sports associations.

Restructuring and expansion of services at the Department of Sports is being done to ensure an inclusive approach to services and to be able to provide opportunities for a wider range of ages. Some special initiatives now being offered are the annual Older Persons Sports Day— Mr. Roy, you heard that?

[Laughter]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Some special initiatives now being offered are the annual Older Persons Sports Day, seniors’ exercise programmes — the seniors exercise programme is one of the programmes that I spoke about earlier that happens at the Intergenerational Hub as well — collaborative services with the Prisons and other facilities while still offering various sporting programmes in the community and schools.

A major milestone in sports is the planning and development of the Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre, inclusive of a 50-metre and a 25-metre pool, a true game-changer not only for local and regional swimming, but also for community engagement. This initiative is a joint project between the public [sector], NPO’s and private sector and is a strong indicator that collaboration with civil service, private sector and non-profits, is the best way to achieve results.

In a historic moment for our Islands, we appointed Mr. Jordan Crooks as our first-ever Cabinet-appointed Sports Ambassador and we were proud when

he represented the Cayman Islands on the global stage, breaking records and bringing home world championship medals.

Mr. Chair, for the first time in the Cayman Islands, we also proudly hosted the 4th Caribbean Forum of the World Anti-Doping Agency, which strengthens our regional commitment and supports the importance of zero substance use in sports. This reflects a stronger and fairer Cayman that adapts to a changing world, one that upholds integrity, health, and opportunity for all.

We eagerly anticipate the completion of the review of the National Youth and National Sports Policies in the 2026-2027 budget cycle. These policies will provide a strategic and comprehensive direction for the development of youth and sports initiatives in the Cayman Islands. With the final review we will finalise further consultation for implementation of these frameworks.

Culture and Heritage has been a key element in our work. With the recognition of Emancipation Day at the end of 2023, after a 62-year absence, this was a profound step in reclaiming an important aspect of our heritage. I am proud, Mr. Chair, that we are now celebrating this part of our history annually.

With the approval of Cabinet, we are now formally recognising five new National Symbols further strengthening national pride and identity. With our National Dish, Drink, Dessert, Dance, and Dress highlighted through the “Weh We From” campaign, Caymanian identity and pride was featured through storytelling, books, and social media engagement. Mr. Chair, initiatives such as these embody the very essence of a modern Cayman, one that is proudly rooted in our past, yet confident and forward-looking as we embrace the future. They remind us that our cultural heritage is not a relic of history, but a living foundation that informs who we are, how we grow, and how we present ourselves to the world.

The development and the publication of a book series began with *Our National Heroes*, an educational book written by Mrs. Camille Angel (née Bodden) and illustrated by Mr. Brian Watler Jr. This book takes young readers on a historical journey to learn about and increase awareness of important Caymanian figures who have helped shape our beloved isles.

Our National Symbols is an educational book designed to teach young readers about the symbols that help foster national identity and cultural pride. The Cayman Islands has 11 National Symbols and this book highlights them all: The Coat of Arms, National Flag, National Song, National Bird, National Tree, National Flower, National Dance, National Drink, National Dish, National Dessert and the National Dress. This book has been published and we are eagerly awaiting its arrival.

Another book entitled *Freely* is a story of emancipation written by Camille Angel and illustrated by Raphael Powery. It is in its final stages of development for publication. Additionally, with permission from the

West Bay Heritage Committee we republished the *West Bay Dictionary*, a collection of West Bay words from years gone by. Mr. Chair, I know you’d be proud of that one. Over 2,000 copies of each publication have been printed and distributed to all public and private schools for classrooms and libraries as well as the public libraries across the Islands, at no cost to these institutions, an effort to ensure these materials are accessible.

Community engagement has been at the heart of our work. The operationalisation of the Intergenerational Hub, Cayman Collection Centre, the Sunrise Intergenerational Cottage in East End and the Emancipation Centre, have all created new spaces for cultural learning and connection. These initiatives show that investing at the community level creates lasting benefits that strengthen the social fabric of our Islands.

In addition to the existing Culture and Heritage facilities, the Ministry is excited to establish, in this upcoming Budget cycle, facilities to highlight the history of our Uniform Services and artefacts from our eastern district which are very unique to those areas.

In precious memory of our creative and talented artisan, the late Ms. Reba Dilbert, with approval and blessings from the family, we wish to open a centre that will keep her memory alive by teaching our children the skill of costume making. This all brings further excitement to our Culture and Heritage services in the new budget cycle.

Mr. Chair, with the restructuring of the Celebrate Cayman Team in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, we are now bringing together the Ministry’s Events Unit and the Culture & Heritage Unit under a unified framework. The focus of this team will be to promote, educate, protect, and celebrate all things Caymanian — instilling pride, respect, appreciation, and national cohesion throughout our Islands.

In addition to the various works in the Ministry, our statutory authorities are fundamental to the preservation and interpretation of culture and heritage, providing educational experiences, collecting, conserving and exhibiting culturally significant objects and are custodians of our heritage. The National Gallery has expanded educational services across all three Islands; [and] the National Museum has presented powerful exhibitions such as “Slavery Be Dead, We Be Free”; and the Cayman National Cultural Foundation continues to expand its efforts in fostering artistic expression.

Mr. Chair, the Ministry undertook a series of impactful capital projects during the 2024-2025 Budget year and we look forward to completing projects and starting new projects in 2026-2027.

These investments through our subjects will also reflect our government’s ongoing commitment to improving infrastructure, ensuring safety and accessibility, and providing opportunities for our people across all districts.

Among the major accomplishments, the Cayman Islands Aquatic Centre saw the acquisition of materials and supplies for the installation of two new pools, marking a significant step toward enhancing aquatic and other sports development in the Cayman Islands. At George Dixon Park, ongoing works include the installation of a new multi-sport court and procurement for a canopy cover, bocce court, and bike trail, creating a more versatile and family-friendly recreational space.

The Donovan Rankine Sports Complex benefited from the installation of ball catch nets and refurbishment of its irrigation system; while at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex, the Ministry oversaw the relocation of the shot-put throwing area, replacement of goal systems for four netball courts, optimisation of irrigation systems, retiling and repainting of restrooms, and replacement of hydraulic lifts for the field light poles, ensuring the facility remains safe, modern, and competition-ready.

The East End Cottage was redesigned, renovated, and reopened as the Intergenerational Cottage for the Eastern districts, providing a welcoming space for youth and older persons to connect and learn from one another. Restoration of the Arlette Diaz House on Goring Avenue progressed with significant exterior work completed to preserve its historic integrity, while the Intergenerational Hub at MacLendon Drive saw the completion and occupation of newly fitted-out offices and programming spaces, further strengthening our community outreach.

In terms of capital investments, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry expects to allocate \$5.3 million in 2026 and \$6.9 million in 2027 toward major development works that will elevate our national facilities to world-class standards.

Key projects include:

- Donovan Rankine Sports Complex – Development of a modern player pavilion, improved lighting, and upgraded amenities to enhance local and regional sporting events.
- Ed Bush Revitalisation Project – Comprehensive renovations to the central changing rooms, grounds, and fencing, as well as revitalisation of the practice field to meet community needs and modern standards.
- Turf Upgrades – Installation of new turf at the Annex, Ed Bush, and Haig Bodden fields, supporting safe play and sustainable maintenance.
- National Stadium Revitalisation Project (Phase 1) – Implementation of a master plan addressing parking, grandstands, field and track upgrades, and restroom facilities to transform the site into a premier national venue.
- Establishment of an Artefact Centre for the eastern districts and for Uniform Service.

- Restoration of existing premises for both the National Gallery and the Cayman National Cultural Foundation.
- Museum Building Enhancements – Installation of lift access for differently-abled persons and a modern fire suppression system to ensure safety and accessibility for all.

Through these projects and initiatives, we are reducing inequalities and building a Cayman that is healthier and more productive for every citizen of all ages and abilities, preserving our culture and heritage, while remaining competitive and relevant on the international stage.

In conclusion Mr. Chair, the budget for the Financial Year 2026–2027 embodies our collective vision, uniting our youth, strengthening our sporting capacity, and honouring our culture and heritage. It is a budget that reflects who we are as a people and where we are determined to go as a nation.

The Ministry has set forth a series of strategic initiatives and capital projects that will lend to preserving culture and heritage, elevate our sporting facilities, and enhance opportunities for youth engagement across the Cayman Islands. Through collaboration with the civil service, the private sector, and our non-profit partners, we are building the foundation for sustainable progress.

It is clear that this budget is about lasting opportunities for all Caymanians, a Cayman that is strong and fair, modern yet rooted in its proud heritage. I thank you, for the opportunity to share our vision and plans for the 2026–2027 financial years, and I look forward to working together, with my colleagues, our communities, and all our partners, to make these goals a reality for our beloved Islands.

Thank you and God bless.

APPROPRIATIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR YOUTH, SPORTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

The Chairman: Honourable members, YSC 1 - Advice and Support to the Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage. Are there any questions?

Lady Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Mr. Chair, thank you. Thank you to the Minister. Can you identify what matrix is used to determine funding regarding local sports federations?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. Can you elaborate on what you actually mean by that?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: What matrix is being used to determine how

much money is given to local federations? How do you assign that?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Okay, I just want to understand what you mean. Are you talking about the eight focus sports we were talking about just now, or just for the other sporting entities in general?

[Inaudible response]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Okay. Through you, Mr. Chair, usually the groups write to us requesting a grant, it's then submitted to a grants committee and they make an assessment on it based on several different variables and then they will send it forward for recommendation.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Pertaining to sports federation in itself, as in track and field for example, is there any performance-based funding model in place when it comes to our track athletes or swimming athletes?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. Again, if you're referring to the eight focus sports we have, which are track and field, football, cricket, swimming, basketball, volleyball, et cetera, they have to sign a purchase agreement. If you look in the purchase agreement, you'll see those metrics that they are measured against.

The Chairman: Honourable Member.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: There is a performance-based model in place, is that correct? Meaning they have to perform at a certain level or certain results must be attained in order for them to get funding.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: No, it's not necessarily performance-based, Mr. Chair. They have to be in compliance with the purchase agreement that they signed and are billed quarterly, because they have to send their reports in quarterly and it's assessed based on that.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

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

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Thank you to the lady member who has just given me way while she's looking at her documents.

Through you to the Honourable Minister, can you confirm that in the allocations or distribution of the funding that part of it is for the development of the various skills—seeing as we're a relatively young democracy and we're still trying to develop them for the world stage?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The member's question is actually quite important regarding us trying to develop our athletes. We're doing that through the National Sports Commission, that will help us. Once we look at the policies that we have there, they will help us with developing our athletes and it's not necessarily through these funding mechanisms for the eight focus sports.

The Chairman: Any further questions?

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: I think if I ask the question a different way, maybe we can get a different... Regardless of the results of the athletes' training, do we continue to fund these programmes? I think what we're trying to accomplish is, we fund these programmes, which I think deserve the funding, but how do we know that they are doing what we want them to do, which is to produce great athletes? That's a subjective thought, so I guess the question is, are there any metrics of outcomes for what happens? Do we make a CARIFTA squad that medals, or is there any criteria upon which they continue to get funding, or is it just an automatic situation?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. No, it's not automatic. They have to submit their quarterly reports and it's based on the purchase agreement, so they have to ensure they meet the criteria set in the purchase agreement in each and every one of their quarterly reports. Then, it comes back to the Ministry, it's reviewed by the managers *[INAUDIBLE]* the Deputy Chief Officers, and once they review it and they are okay with the report, then it goes on for the payment to be distributed.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. Do we check to see the level of Caymanian participation in these programmes?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, in the focus sports it's part of the agreement, but through the other sporting bodies, like a football club, it's one of the questions that's asked in the process of filling out the grant application, in regard to Caymanians on the team, how many Caymanians are going to be involved with that sporting event for the grant that they are requesting.

The Chairman: Member of Bodden Town West, continuing.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you. I want to use for example, the Cayman Islands National Squash Association. They get like \$150,000 of taxpayers' money. Roughly how many Caymanian children are in that programme?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I don't have that particular set of information on hand; certainly we can get it for you. What is important is that we give those Caymanians an opportunity to get the training, but these days, you know, you just can't look at somebody and say that they're not a Caymanian. I will get that information and I can pass it on to you, sir.

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

Mr. Chairman, going back to the programmes — some of these associations, do we look at the background of the people who run these programmes to see if there are any complaints against them for racism or discrimination or anything like that? Or, if they had a complaint, who would they make it to?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair. There's specific criteria they have to meet in terms of what they produce and send to us, but they also have to attend the Darkness to Light Training. Because children are involved, we have to ensure that we do what we can and ensure that they also protect the children in their care. Certainly, through the purchase agreement, they have to ensure that they perform and deliver certain metrics.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Taking the inspiration and the lead from the honourable Chair in his remarks about making sure we ventilate these issues in Finance Committee— I am inspired by the Chairman's remark. There's one name that keeps popping up, which I will tell you right now — Richard Lyden. Look into him for me, please. I understand he's one who doesn't mean Caymanians too well.

You said this is the forum for it, well this is the forum for it.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Your concerns are noted, sir.

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: I'm always relieved when I'm not the one who's stirring the pot.

I would like to ask the Minister for support again with the Central Scranton Park, of which he is aware that there is a multipurpose court being installed. I know that it will be installed beautifully because the Minister now responsible for the park is making [adjustments] to the levelling of the basketball court to make sure that it's appropriately levelled. I know your Deputy Chief Officer went down there and saw that it needed some adjustments and the Minister has given me his commitment to have that fixed.

With that being said, I know you have some TPs available for community clubs and sponsors and so forth, it is my hope to get basketball back to where it used to be for George Town. I know you are a man from the east, as most wise men come.

An Hon. Member: Yes, sir.

[Laughter]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: No truer words have ever been spoken.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: A wise man as you are, I know you would support me in my efforts to build back that strong basketball culture we had in George Town. I'm asking you from now to help support a George Town Central basketball club which we intend to bring to the court and keep our youth in a very positive sporting arena.

Again, you are aware of the design of the park to have several things happening and I want that functioning and highly trafficked as often as possible, so I'll be reaching out for support in respect to bringing that to fruition.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: The Filipinos already gone with that!

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: *Nuh no Filipino comin' deh!* Sorry, no disrespect. Mr. Chairman, in your spirit of ventilating the truth, I want to make it clear. Unfortunately, there has been a culture of takeover in respect to the basketball courts. Though I support them — if I understand correctly, it's [like] the national sport in their country — there have been some disputes over the ability of Caymanians to have access to the courts. I'll tell you what, I don't think they're *gonna* be able to come down to Central and do that, so that's a different story altogether.

I want it to be minded that the intention for that is to get the young people in my community [engaged] with something positive happening. I want to stick to the positives. I just want your support for a basketball club and I'm hoping that you would award the support or that commitment.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair. I just want to remind the Member for George Town Central it says 'youth and sports', the first two words in our Ministry.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, did I take that as a commitment? I heard him recognise the labelling of his Ministry, I just didn't hear the part about him committing to supporting the basketball club.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: We will commit to providing whatever support we need to for our youth and if it means basketball club in Central, we will work on that, sir.

The Chairman: Lady Member for West Bay West, Ms. Hunter.

Mrs. Julie J. T. Hunter, Elected Member for West Bay West: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Culture and Heritage, I've had the privilege to witness first-hand some of the tireless efforts of the Minister, his department, and his staff. I don't really have a question, but I just want to make a statement to show my support for the tireless efforts that they have participated in across not only the Islands but the region in the many community and cultural events that I have attended and participated in.

With the return of CARIFESTA in 2025, I just want to say that was a truly remarkable experience for me. I had the honour of attending and supporting our delegation as we proudly showcased Caymanian cul-

ture on the international stage in Barbados. Our representation went far beyond traditional dress. It included our artisans, our singers, performers, creators, facilitators and panellists, and it was truly inspiring to me to see our Islands shine amongst many of the nations, especially the showcasing of our own filmmaker, Jazz Pitcairn's short film, *Ivan* which received tremendous feedback. The positive reception of our delegation was a proud moment for all of us as Caymanians.

I also want to commend the folk singers on the job that they are doing.

Mr. Chairman, preserving our culture and heritage must be a collective effort for all of us. Each of us has a role to play. I was so proud when Minister Rankine so passionately said the other night at the concert that all of us have to teach one to take our culture and heritage forward. He challenged all of us that each one of us should take one young person this year and teach them a form of art, teach them one aspect of our culture or a story, something from the past that we can pass on. That really challenged me.

Attending the concert as a whole was a real proud moment for me, because not only were the folk singers performing at a very high level, but they've now established a junior folk singers choir to pass on the torch to our youth. Seeing the children as young as 10 performing so beautifully was really inspiring and it was a powerful reminder that our heritage is so very, very important and it is to be lived every single day.

I just want to say well done to the folk singers, well done to the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, Ms. Teresa, Ventisha, Minister Rankine and all of their staff who put so much effort into preserving our culture and heritage. Well done, all of you.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: If I could add Mr. Chair, for the first time ever in a CARIFESTA event they had a youth delegation, and this is the first time ever that we included participants from the Brac. I will ensure that we will always do that. As long as I am Minister, we need to ensure that whatever we do, we do it in the Brac, or if we go to events like CARIFESTA, they are part of that as well. We can't just talk about preserving our culture and heritage in Grand Cayman alone.

An Hon. Member: Amen.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: I also want to note to the lady Member for Cayman Brac East and the young gentleman here to my right, that we will be working together to ensure that that is done across the Cayman Islands.

Hon. Nickolas T. A. DaCosta: Thank you very much, sir.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've been going all over the place with this. I just want to take it back to sports. Basketball, Mr. Chairman — I never thought I would be the one sitting here asking questions on basketball, but my youngest son made sure that I was dragged out of bed sometimes at minutes to five in the morning to take him to National Team training, only to find out that the particular hall they were using was used the night before for another event, so their training was cancelled.

I have experience with basketball where the National Team wants to train and end up chipping in \$25 each to rent the facility, sometimes from government, or to pay the coach. I don't know what the money goes to just to have a training session or a balling session, and these are all Caymanian kids — very motivated, dedicated boys and girls. Like I said, they go to the Breakfast Club, 5 o'clock every morning when they have an opportunity to do so, and they do not have a home to train in. They have nowhere dedicated where they have the ability to run a regular schedule of National Team training.

I want to ask the Minister if there are any plans for a basketball arena of any kind or a dual purpose complex that the Basketball Association would have access to on a regular basis.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. We share some of the facilities that are available right now, for example, the school hall at John Gray, but as far as I can remember, the Basketball Association has a lease from government to do exactly what you're talking about. Obviously, we'd have to produce some follow up with them to find exactly where they are in that process, but they had a peppercorn lease with government very near to the university, I believe, and they were supposed to be establishing that. *I will give a commitment to follow up with them and find out where they are with that and I see how we can help support them.*

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Just to say, as a parent, we've asked that question numerous times: how can we help? As parents, we've chipped in to rent everything from the ARC to the other school halls so that they could have a practice or play games.

I had no idea, honestly, that basketball was as big amongst our young people as it is.

[Inaudible interjection]

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

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: They medal when they go out to compete.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: They do very well when they do travel. I just wanted to raise that here today. He's no longer playing, mainly because after he got to 17, there was no programme to move on to, other than high school.

Continuing on basketball. I know the Deputy [Leader] alluded to it earlier, and I have no issue. I checked into it. The Cox Court in George Town is a community court. That was another spot where the kids used to meet up on a Sunday afternoon, Saturday afternoon, some evenings during the week. Actually, some evenings during the week, I was pleasantly surprised by the interaction between the more senior basketball players, local basketball players and the kids when they went out. They included them. I remember in West Bay playing football, you had to sit on the sideline until one of the senior guys said you come and replace me — but they picked the teams evenly with the kids and adults.

However, several months out of the year, the court is booked out by a league. I think, rather than the parents or the kids taking their allowances to book the ARC for \$200 or whatever it is, the league should go and book a school hall or the ARC at Camana Bay and the community court should be a community court.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I agree.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: I understand that what they're doing is above board. It's actually booked for them by the Basketball Association, but the Cox Court in my constituency is a community court and that should stay as a community court. Tourists go out there and use it. Some of the day-care schools take the kids out there in the day. I do know that it's a very healthy environment in the evenings, a positive and healthy environment with senior and junior Caymanian basketballers.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: In my opinion, if we want our kids to get better, we have to have more facilities like that for them to have access to at all times to play on. For example, the development that we say we are going to do in East End at the George Dixon Park, which is a covered multipurpose court; that's another space. We need to have those kind of spaces all over our communities. North Side just built a basketball court near the launching ramp. We need to develop these kind of spaces for our kids from the time they are young, even if they're in a league, because when they are not playing league games, they can still continue to practise

and show their skills and develop the skills that they've learned.

In saying all that Mr. Chair, it would be most welcome support from all Members of this House to, once the financial wherewithal shows itself that we can develop more sporting facilities for our kids.

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

The Chairman: Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess I should have put a question to the Minister. My question to the Minister is: would he agree with me that the Cox Court should be reserved as a community court and not booked out for leagues?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The short answer is yes, I think we should support it as a community-based basketball court, but I guess with the right management of it, I can't see the reason why at some point if there's a league game in the night time, why we couldn't share. Certainly, I think we should use it quite often as a community court. There are also some courts down at the back of the George Town Primary School, are those still used?

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: No, not appropriate. The one at Cox is very basic as well and could use some TLC.

Through you, Mr. Chairman to the Minister. Again, the persons using the court have full permission. My understanding is that the association books it for them. They designate that court for their league, but they have several games per night, plus they do food, entertainment, all sorts, so there's no opportunity to share the court. That's my point. I think the intention of that court was for a community court, for the community to use, not for a specific league to dominate or take any evening of the court, in fact. I can understand a one-off event, but not a full season of league matches.

The Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, I will have discussions with my team because initially, I thought it wasn't on our asset register, but I would just confirm that it is. I'll have some discussions with them and see what we can organise in terms of ensuring that the community gets its fair share of play on that court.

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

The Chairman: Just to say, Minister, perhaps one thing you could do and get a report back to all members of the Committee in writing is, as I understand it, just as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has alluded to, the hall at John Gray is shared among all associations and everyone is given access. In other words, no one entity can just pre-book and therefore just pre-book all the slots. I think that's the issue that's at hand here, all of the slots get booked; and so once all the slots get booked, anyone else that calls, there are no viable slots after work available.

I can assure the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I can't dribble, I can barely rebound and I can't shoot, but basketball is very good exercise. In my early twenties, I can assure you that was at a community court, because I used to drive from West Bay, before we had the court at Sir John A. Cumber Primary School, it was a group of us who used to go to Town and pick-up basketball games were allowed there because no one entity had it booked out all the time.

Perhaps Minister, we might want to look at that land space. I think we still own some land in that area. Perhaps this is an opportunity to have multiple courts as well. We can talk all we want about all of the training that happens, the Magic Johnson effect is still how you learn to be a proficient player. You have a basketball in your hand at all times, you dribble to and from the bathroom, to and from the local court and that's how you then become extremely skilled. Pick-up basketball courts across the United States of America is where great players are made and then refined at school under instruction. We need these community courts to really, really be in effect, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has alluded to.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Bodden Town West, and then Red Bay.

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

Mr. Chairman, I just want to go on record and thank you as Minister of Finance and the Honourable Minister of Sports for the basketball court at the Will T. Park, once Minister Jay completes it.

On a more serious note, the average voter age in the last election was like 52 or 53. We have an ageing population and whether we like it or not, we have got to start doing more to encourage wellness, because I can tell you we have not dealt with NGS 55 or HEA 2 yet, and it would be much cheaper to invest in activities where people can go and get healthy versus the other side.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: We know what it looks like when they don't do it. I want to thank you all in advance for finding the funds and for Minister Jay for developing the park, which I know is in your budget, so I appreciate it.

Thank you.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, I also want to echo your sentiments in the remarks you gave earlier. Certainly we will have a look at the space at Cox and see if there's anything that we can steal from the Housing Trust to develop some more courts, because I think that would be one of the ways to go. Then we could designate one of those courts as the community court, you can't be playing league game on that and things like that. We must invest more in sports, that is a no-brainer. We must invest more in sports.

The Chairman: Honourable Member for Red Bay, Mr. Tatum.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Mr. Chair, thank you very much. *I'm gonna join unna* in the basketball conversation, but before I do, I want to echo the words of my friend across the way, in terms of the huge importance of Cayman culture, but I take my hat off especially to all the people, all the volunteers who spend the time to keep our culture alive. We owe them a huge amount.

In terms of basketball, Mr. Chairman, I agree entirely. We need more facilities. The Eddie Sanchez Community Park has space. In the 'Go East' spirit, after you pass Cox, I've been looking at doing something, as the Minister knows, but we need a bigger push in terms of trying to get a basketball court there for use by the youngsters in the area. A multipurpose court perhaps. Let's think of that facility as well, Ministers, as we're looking to broaden the availability of basketball courts. I have one other issue after this.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, I again agree with us investing in sports and certainly he and I can have a conversation on some of the sporting facilities that we can possibly work to have installed at the Sanchez Park.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: That would be very good, sir. It would serve both the Red Bay and the Prospect constituencies. I think that would be a very good thing if we could get that done.

I've been trying also to get some entities to possibly look at funding that, but let's talk later offline.

The Chairman: Honourable member, continuing.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you. Through you, sir, to the Minister. I know government used to provide a grant to

the Cayman Island Sailing Club to provide sailing lessons and sailing experiences for young people from the schools, including many Caymanians. I was, prior to the election, understanding that that funding had stopped. I was just wondering if you could let me know if that's still the case or if funding has been returned to the sailing club so that we can get youngsters sailing and keep that Caymanian tradition. That's another part of our culture that we want to make sure doesn't die, so if we can [we should] make sure that Caymanian youngsters in particular have the opportunity to learn sailing skills. I recall that the club was started by folks like John Bodden, Gerry Kirkconnell and so on— who also were Olympians.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The grant is still available, you just have to apply to the ministry to be considered.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I thought I understood that that request had been made, though this was prior to the election. I need to follow up with him to see if anything has happened. If you could check into that and let me know, I'd be grateful.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you Mr. Chair, I ask the Member for Red Bay if he could just get them to send me an email with the grant request.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: So said, so done, sir.

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

The Chairman: Honourable Member for George Town Central.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. That's supposed to be the one that you never forget.

Mr. Chairman, I would just like to help my good friend say borrow permanently, rather than steal from his colleague down at housing— you can borrow the land permanently because it's for all of us. Just move the boundary one little bit, yeah.

Speaking of basketball, the Cayman Classic has been an event that has brought much tourism opportunities and great opportunities for exposure, but I see that there's nowhere in any of the budgets where the money is allocated. I figured that maybe they took it from another Minister and gave it to you. I'm hoping that this Cayman Classic is going to be supported as it brings in tremendous amounts of tourism revenue as well as tourism exposure from a TV rights perspective and advertising. We normally would give them a minimum of \$75,000 per year, which we get back quite quickly, unlike some other ones.

I do not see it in the Minister for Tourism's budget, which is quite sad. I don't know if it's something that your Ministry would support. I would support increasing your budget by \$75,000 today, if that is the case and is necessary. It would be very sad if Cayman Classic would not be able to continue due to lack of funding. Could you opine in any capacity?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, can you speak to the Cayman Classic?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I think we have given the Cayman Classic some level of sponsorship, but I think most of it, as the Member for George Town Central has alluded to, came from the Ministry of Tourism. Now, if the Ministry of Tourism wants to give me the \$75,000 to manage that for him, I will gladly take it. Otherwise, if he would support increasing the sports budget, I will take that as well so we can support that, because I see the benefit of the Cayman Classic. I have been around it for the last 2, 3 years and I see the value that they bring. I see the tourism dollars that they bring, because when the teams come they don't just come with their teams, they come with their families and friends. Many people come to the Islands to watch the Cayman Classic.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Thank you Mr. Minister, and I'll further the questions when we get to the Ministry of Tourism's output. Hopefully there could be some further explanation.

I do have one other question about basketball if we can. I had proposed, during the administration of which I was a part, trying to partner with the Lions Club for the Lions Centre. I say this from an investment perspective and it's kind of hard and late now, but I've always said to the government to consider investments and support to the Lions Club of Grand Cayman because they own Lions Centre. Lions Centre has been a facility that has been offering services and support to the Cayman Islands for decades upon decades. The value of the things they have done are probably unquantifiable. We see that there needs to be some upgrades to the Lion Centre and I know the non-profit is trying to raise the necessary monies.

I made a proposal, but unfortunately the election came and financial availability wasn't there then, but I think it's something the government should consider, which is to provide financial support as an investment into the Centre because it hosts so many things.

It used to be the number one location for Miss Cayman. They've had conferences there. Unfortunately, they have a lot of loud music which the homeowners in the back are now at odds with. I know that the Lions Club would love it to be enclosed which allows further offerings. I was of the view from the Minister of Tourism's perspective that conference tourism is something that we cannot attract and there's a niche

market there available for us to get, but we never have a large enough facility outside of the hotels which are pretty expensive. If you were to take up all the money that we spend at the hotels to have any kind of conference, just in one year's spend we could probably make back that money and give it to the Lions Club which can then use the function of that place for the other things that they do to give back to the community.

Mr. Chairman, what I'm suggesting the government to consider — and it leads back to the sports component, which is another area and another facility for sporting programmes because it is a centre that allows loads of things, but basketball was one of the main ones — maybe it should consider lending the necessary amounts to the Lions Club of Grand Cayman non-profit association and get the equity back by way of guarantee of usage, whereby government normally would pay a hotel or some other facility to use it, we can just work back off the money over maybe a 2, 5 or 10-year period.

We would know that that investment is not only getting our money back, but also helping that non-profit in the good work that they do. We can actually bring back Miss Cayman to a location other than the hotels, we can have a better sporting location outside of the schools. We can enclose it and stop the music that is disturbing the residents around the area and we are investing in a non-profit that has been reinvesting back into the Cayman Islands for decades. I think there are so many positive opportunities to give back by doing this. I don't think it would cost the government more than maybe \$1-2 million and I think it would definitely be worth it from all those points; so I hope that the government will consider that.

I know that the Minister will not be able to answer that, but I know the Honourable Premier is listening and if there's ever an opportunity to consider it, I would love to hear.

The Chairman: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Could it be done in consideration with block voting the rest of this appropriation?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, I'm happy to entertain it, but I'm actually asking a serious question.

The Premier, Hon. André M. Ebanks: Serious question, yes. For all the reasons you said it is a valid proposal, so we'll look into it.

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

Lastly, when we're talking about basketball and services, I just want to thank the company Island Pav-

ing that has done a tremendous job helping [with] basketball courts — sometimes for free — to make sure kids have a play area. I know the company worked well with the Minister and his development for the basketball court in North Side at a discounted price. Island Paving has always been supportive of doing this. I think when it comes to basketball, what the government should do is sit with Island Paving and say— matter of fact, I think Dart had a plan similar to this where they wanted a number of basketball courts all across the island and I don't know why that was dropped.

Basketball, like the Leader has said, is a growing national sport, more than it's ever been before. Investing in these types of facilities is low cost, first off, particularly the ones on the outside and it will keep our kids from doing other things. I'll tell you the truth, if I wasn't at the basketball court as much as I was when I was younger, I would be worse than I am now — *and unna know I rough*. Think about that from a positive perspective.

I just want to give that endorsement to Island Paving and thank them for all that they do in respect of this. Maybe with a stronger partnership with government, they may be willing to offer a reasonable discount. I don't want them to do it for free because they have to live and eat too, but I know that they care, particularly when it comes to sports, they've said so; I've talked to the owner. The Minister, Honourable Jay Ebanks is very familiar with them and I know they'll be willing to partner with you if you can come up with a strategic way for us to further develop basketball in the Cayman Islands. Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Member for George Town Central for those comments. I've had many discussions with Mr. Barry and he's very community-minded and willing to help us in whatever way he can.

Certainly, there have been a couple of partnerships with him already. One is the resurfacing of the court at the Civic Centre in East End.

By the way, that's another court that's available because we resurfaced that. There are two pickleball courts on it, new backboards and everything. If you ever want to drive out to get some fried fish in East End, come spend some money, and come use our court, okay?

The Chairman: That's a kind offer, Minister. We do need to have this be a fully strategic partnership and I think what would be useful is if we were to look nationally, given what you've said to me off mic — that we stop doing this piecemeal and we simply go to the entity, look nationally, see what the overall cost would be, what their contribution would be, and let's go for it. Whilst you may think that the fried fish in East End is that good, we're not going to have young people be

able to come out on that frequency, as tempting as that offer is.

Minister of Tourism, as Member for George Town South.

Hon. Gary B. Ruddy, Deputy Premier: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I'd also like to thank the Member for George Town Central for recognising Island Paving, because when it comes to one Caymanian who does well and gives back to his community and helped so many families and so many youth, it is Mr. Barry Bodden. I want to wholeheartedly thank the Member for George Town Central for bringing that up; and thank you Barry.

The Chairman: Members, Honourable Leader of the Opposition, if I could just pause for one minute. We have taken a wide range of questions, and so after your conclusion, I would be encouraging members of the Committee to take a number of the appropriations that we can vote on.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few more. I'll try to keep them as brief as possible.

Through you, Mr. Chairman, can the Honourable Minister this evening provide a list of sports camps or football camps that will be supported in the upcoming budget; and if not, would he undertake to provide those to the Committee?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: There are several unknowns in that Mr. Chair, because people write in for grants and when the grants come in we support them that way. The Sports Department has several camps, but until someone applies for a grant we don't know what they are going to be doing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, through you, I thank the Minister for that. I know of at least one camp that was told that there was a different criteria a couple of years ago, so I think they'd stopped applying under a previous Minister who insinuated that the criteria had changed. If that's the case though, that's fine.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Can you ask them to apply to us for the grant? Then it goes to the grants committee and we will evaluate it, sir.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: I certainly will, thank you.

Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Again, I'll try to be as brief as possible.

Mr. Chairman, through you, I'll ask the Honourable Minister if he is aware that there is one young Caymanian who has already made it to the pro level and two who are aspiring to be pros golfers. Is he aware of those?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, I know of, I think his name is Justin, the pro golfer. I know of him, but I am not aware personally of the other two that you may be speaking of.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you. Through you, Mr. Chairman, can the Honourable Minister say whether or not his Ministry is financially supporting Mr. Hastings as a pro from the Cayman government?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. It would be based on his request for that support as it's not an automatic thing. If he requested, we certainly would consider it.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister confirm with his team whether any applications were made for sponsorship?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Mr. Chair, we are not aware of any request that has been made and if it was made, can you ask them to resend it? I am certainly not aware and they are not aware of any request that has been made by Mr. Justin.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: You have been reliably informed. *[Laughter]*

Thank you. I'm just going to quickly say to the Honourable Minister that I know that the Cayman Islands Golf Association, several years ago, had an agreement with, I think, the PGA and the goal was to produce Caymanian pro golfers. Since that we have won the Pan American Amateur Championships, which is a huge feat and we've had players playing on the world's largest stages, like the US Open, representing the Cayman Islands. I would humbly suggest to the Minister that his team perhaps speak with the Cayman Islands Golf Association to see how we can be involved as a government once they have come out of their

youth programme and have transitioned into the semi pro or pro level, so that we can get the maximum. This is also being selfish, because Justin just played this weekend on ESPN at the Bermuda Classic. He made the cut. He played with all the big pros and finished in the top 25; that is just unbelievable publicity. He's wearing the Butterfield Bank sponsorship, not the Cayman Islands sponsorship.

The Chairman: Can I just seek one bit of clarification? Mr. Hew, are you saying that if a Caymanian makes pro and does well financially that the government should still fund the person?

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: No, the person needs sponsorship to get to the point where they are doing well, but it's still also [good] value for money to have the Cayman Islands flag being posted on their sleeve or cap, wherever it may be, tourism-wise and otherwise. Yes, it does take quite a while to get to the point where you're getting into the big tournaments and making money.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the Member for George Town North for that, and we'll certainly have some discussions with my team so that we can possibly reach out to them. Yes.

Hon. Joseph X. Hew, Leader of the Opposition: Last one for me, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

Through you to the Honourable Minister, I'm switching gears a little bit. I'm going to go to Pirates Week. Can I ask the Honourable Minister whether or not Pirates Week is seen as a tourism attraction or as a local cultural celebration?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, we see it as a combination of both. While we didn't have much time to do a lot of planning this year, for Pirates Week 2026 we are going to be working with the Ministry of Tourism from very early in the year so that we can try to bring it back to as close as what it was designed to do 48 years ago.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Thank you.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: I have a question.

The Chairman: Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, through you. In keeping with your answer, will the Ministry review or revamp the structure when it comes to marketing for that event, to boost cultural tourism and local participation.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. Short and long answer is yes; that's why we'll be working with the Minister of Tourism so we can ensure to boost the marketing, et cetera for Pirates Week, starting from very early.

The Chairman: Honourable Member, continuing.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair through you, given the announcement that the government plans to review the foreign promoters following the disappointing Cayman Fiesta event that happened last weekend, can the Minister explain how the budget provides that any event shouldn't be competing with a national event? Or will it be a policy?

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, I think I can figure out where the Member for George Town West is going. Certainly when we heard of the Cayman Fiesta weekend, so to speak, it was of some concern to us. Going forward, I'm going to be looking for this Government to ensure that when we have a national event, whether it be Pirates Week or Heroes Day, whatever national event we have, that we don't support any other activities on that same day. Whether we do that through liquor licence or by work permit grants, nothing if we are having a national event.

I hope I can get the support of everyone in this House for that.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Just as a follow up Mr. Chair, I believe that based on the outcome of that event last weekend, the social media went crazy.

The Chairman: In a good way or a bad way?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Oh, bad way, sir. I've had to reach out to one of the performers and apologise for the experience they had, but they said this is not on Cayman, they enjoyed Cayman, but they would never

ever do business with that entity again. The entity is called Reynolds Entertainment Group.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: In listening very carefully to the question posed, whilst it is an innocent question, can the Minister say whether his Ministry was approached about a rather exorbitant pay out for those persons to not hold their event?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. When we heard of this event happening, I made contact with one of the persons who I thought was supposed to be aligned with it. We had a meeting, we expressed our concerns of them having something on one of our national event's [days] and we suggested that we could partner with them. After that, sir, you are quite right in your statement just now and we kindly said no.

The Chairman: The point I'm making is, not that the Member for George Town West intentionally would have suggested this, but note the line of questioning to this committee. This would set people up to purposely book events when government is going to have it and then suggest to government *we'll back off if...* I go no further. We need to be very careful about what we say, if members follow what I'm saying.

Any further questions?

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Mr. Chairman, *mi nah touch da one deh at all*, but—

An Hon. Member: Touch it a little bit.

Hon. Kenneth V. Bryan, Deputy Leader of the Opposition: Yeah, a little bit. I got three-quarter to from down that side.

Mr. Chairman, from a data availability [standpoint] we were trying to be electronic in our efforts and I'm seeing that I'm being overwhelmed with documents. The statements have been provided, which I'm very happy for, let me make sure that it's clear, but they're not being provided electronically, they're not in the shared folder. I appreciate members are doing their statements when they're opening, but they're not on the shared folder. Can you just get the Ministers or their staff to send it to Parliament, then Parliament will put it in a shared folder so we can have access to them, please?

The Chairman: We'll sort that out from tomorrow.

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

The Chairman: Good suggestion.

We have exhausted a wide ranging number of questions. Is it the members of the committee's view that we now take a block vote on the Minister's Appropriations?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: No.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Member for George Town West. Are we finished with the sports related questions, that's what I was trying to get at?

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Actually, I have one more sports related question.

The Chairman: Member for Bodden Town West.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a young constituent of mine who is interested in going into the schools to get more Caymanian participation, what is the process that he needs to go through to request funds for what he is looking to promote?

The Chairman: What is he looking to promote? Anyone going into schools has to actually get permission from —

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: I'll tell you what it is and how it caught my radar. It is Julian Jervis. He's done very well in squash and he wants to get more Caymanian participation within the schools.

I saw him one day, in the middle of the day, jogging in Bodden Town. Because of his complexion, I actually thought he was some white tourist. I'm like, there's no Caymanian who would be out there in the middle of the sun, jogging. Turns out that he is actually preparing for the Squash Championship in Jamaica, which I understand the conditions are quite hot, and he was out there jogging at 1 o'clock in the afternoon when the sun was really hot, preparing for that.

I was speaking to some people about it and they were saying that he's also interested in expanding that within the schools to get a lot of Caymanians participating in it and even a makeshift court, because you do have portable squash courts that you can probably use.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair, as you quite rightly alluded to, yes, certainly going into schools would be some kind of partnership between us, Department of Sports and the Ministry of Education, but

certainly we would be willing to facilitate any partnership like that. As long as the Minister of Education agrees.

The Chairman: Certainly.

Can we now take the sports related outputs? Are there questions on heritage, is that what I take it?

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: I had one on sports.

The Chairman: Lady Member for Cayman Brac East.

Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly: Shouldn't be long, depending on the response. I wanted an update on the swimming pool that we're all eagerly anticipating.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I believe we've all crossed the planning hurdles now. I think everything is approved. Myrtha Pools is here on the island looking over some of the materials, because I believe that some of it came damaged and they're actually here looking at it now. We are just finalising the partnership agreement and then we'll be going full steam ahead, but we have all the planning approvals right now.

The Chairman: Mr. Tatum, Member for Red Bay.

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I won't be long, this is just a quick comment to put this on the record. Through you to the Minister, when we have our chat maybe tomorrow, I just want to discuss some concerns that some friends of mine in Cayman Brac have with regards to sports there.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: I know it's not under him.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. A. Roy Tatum: Oh, it's under Nickolas. In which case, I'll chat with Nickolas tomorrow then. Thanks.

BLOCK VOTE:

YSC 1, YSC 3, NGS 60, OE 81, OE 82

The Chairman: Members, are we ready to take the block vote on the Ministry as a whole?

Since we're finished with sports, pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether members approve the items on the Schedule described as —

- YSC 1 - Advice and Support to the Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage in

the amounts of \$4,332,747 in 2026 and \$4,972,999 in 2027;

- YSC 3 - Sports Services, \$5,063,392 in 2026 and \$5,210,991 in 2027;
- NGS 60 - Sports Programmes, \$1,289,125 in 2026 and \$1,289,125 in 2027;
- OE 81 - World Anti-Doping Agency, \$5,000 in 2026 and \$5,000 in 2027; and
- OE 82 - Regional Anti-Doping Organisation, \$3,000 in 2026 and \$3,000 in 2027

to be added to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: YSC 1, YSC 3, NGS 60, OE 81, and OE 82 passed.

YSC 4 – Youth Services

The Chairman: We turn our attention to youth services and culture items. Are there any questions, beginning with YSC 4?

There are no questions on YSC 4. Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve YSC 4 - Youth Services in the amounts of \$1,196,680 in 2026 and \$1,264,978 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: YSC 4 passed.

YSC 5 – Celebrate Cayman

The Chairman: YSC 5 - Celebrate Cayman.
Member for Bodden Town West.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. I know he and I spoke offline about that, but as you said, let's make sure to keep things in the public domain. The Catboat Club, again, expanding on what my good friend from Red Bay spoke about in terms of the heritage and so forth. I know he raised a sailing issue, but the catboat is something that's also uniquely Caymanian. I know it is something that the Minister also supports, so I'm just curious if they can set aside some funds to support that very worthy organisation in terms of promoting and preserving Caymanian culture and heritage.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, can you commit to an undertaking of such?

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. Certainly, we will consider supporting them. Obviously it would have to be done officially, I can't just say, here it is. They'll write me officially. We've discussed that with them already, sir.

The Chairman: Pursuant to Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve YSC 5 - Celebrate Cayman in the amounts of \$1,932,886 in 2026 and \$2,851,737 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: YSC 5 passed.

[Crosstalk]

BLOCK VOTE: NAG 1, NAG 2, NAG 3, NAG 4

The Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve in block the following items on the Schedule—

- NAG 1 - National Arts, Exhibitions And Festivals in the amount of \$186,250 in 2026 and \$192,000 in 2027;
- NAG 2 - National Art Collection, Care and Preservation, \$266,250 in 2026 and \$272,000 in 2027;
- NAG 3 - Art Education, Outreach and Training in the amount of \$277,630 in 2026 and \$283,380 in 2027; and
- NAG 4 - Art Information - Facilities, Promotion, Scholarship and Publication in the amounts of \$319,870 in 2026 and \$325,620 in 2027

to the Bill.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: NAG 1, NAG 2, NAG 3 and NAG 4 passed.

The Chairman: MUS 4 - Collection and Preservation of Significant Material Evidence.

In accordance with Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the following items on the Schedule to the Bill—

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: I'm in the hands of members. I thought I'd heard members say to take a block vote on the museum.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, I said I had questions. I stopped you from then.

The Chairman: Oh! In all seriousness member, I thought the insinuation was to take the block vote.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: No, that's why we did the NAGs and then we stopped.

Thank you Premier for confirming that I did.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman, through you. I am looking in the Ownership Agreement and on page 287 that deals with the museum, I noticed that they were looking to increase their staff from seven in 2025 to eight in 2027; but then, as I'm looking on their statement of financial performance on page 306 of the ownership agreement, I noticed that their staff costs went from \$350,000 in 2024 to over \$597,000 in 2025, to now a forecast of \$706,000 in 2026. In short, Mr. Chairman, it went from \$350,000 in 2024 to \$706,000 in 2026, literally almost doubling. I was trying to understand what's the rationale for that large increase in such a short period of time?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. It was an increase in the staffing because there was also an increase in the programmes that they were delivering.

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

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The costing was the director and then some additional costs that related to CINICO and other administrative staff-related increases.

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

Mr. Chairman, through you to the Honourable Minister. How this entity ended up on my radar and just to put things in context — on page 316 of the Ownership Agreement on Note 28 that deals with related party

and key management personnel disclosures, I noticed in 2024 the total related party and key management personnel disclosures was \$256,732, but then the total salary was \$267,502; and then in 2025, forecast for the key management was roughly \$471,000 and the salaries, wages and allowance was \$471,000; and then in 2026, the total salaries and wages was \$562,439 and the total for key management and related party was \$561,564. It is almost as if to say that just about every single staff member in the National Gallery was part of the key management personnel, pretty much.

That's how this actually ended up on my radar. That's why I was trying to understand like how many managers you have versus how many staff. How many chiefs, how many Indians?

[Pause]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time, I can always get the answer offline. You know the accountant in me, you understand.

I have two other questions on the museum. On page 315 [of the ownership agreement] that deals with donations, Note 19, it says that for 2024 the total amount of donations was \$32,777, then there was no forecasted donations for 2025, and then in the budget for 2026 and 2027 it was \$212,209 for both. I was just curious as to what assumptions were driving those donations, bearing in mind that there was nothing forecasted for 2025.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: One second, Mr. Chair while I consult.

[Pause]

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I've been informed that prior to last year they weren't doing any donations and no donation activities were happening, and then last year, there were certainly donations under an acting temporary director. They are being encouraged by the Ministry to continue with their donation and fundraising efforts because they now have a new director who is in the post.

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

Mr. Chairman, my last question related to the museum is on page 316, note 21, which deals with supplies and consumables. I noticed the total lease of property and equipment for 2024 was \$188,467, then it went up to \$224,000 in 2025, and then it dropped back down to \$188,000 in 2026. I am suspecting that we gave up some property or something for that cost to have dropped. I was just curious as to what is driving that

decrease — which is not a bad thing, I was just trying to understand it.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. The member is right. That was related to a warehouse we were using at one point, we are no longer using it.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Okay. Thank you.

The Chairman: Lady Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thanks Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, in the interest of time —

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Actually, no, I have one more issue to raise and then you can do the block vote. I did say I had one more issue.

Mr. Chairman, it's actually not a bad issue, because we're going to end on a really positive note. As I mentioned to you during the break, I'm exercising 49(13) of the Standing Order and I want to play something for the Minister. The Standing Order allows me to do this.

[Music]

The Chairman: The Member did alert me to this during the break but I thought he had forgotten.

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: That's all right.

[Music continues]

Mr. Christopher S. Saunders: Mr. Chairman, I know some of us inside this Parliament would know which group that is. In my days in university I used to play this song often and I would ask some of my fellow classmates and others to guess the name of that group. You would hear from Aswad to Third World to Burning Spear, you name it. That is Cayman's very own Tabia that won, at one point, the top reggae band in the Caribbean sometime in the mid-nineties.

The thing about it Mr. Chairman, through you to Honourable Minister, that is a black mark on our generation in the sense that there was so much talent in this country that basically went nowhere. We are seeing much talent in Cayman today and I would encourage every single member inside this Parliament — as much as we talk about STEM, everyone is now putting the 'A' for the arts back into STEM (STEAM) — to really promote our Caymanian talent. Here was a group that was literally the number one new reggae band across the entire Caribbean, right here in Cayman, and they just kind of fell away.

As we have other groups like Swanky Kitchen Band and others that really keep Caymanian culture

and heritage alive, this is something that we need to make sure that we never lose. We have lost one generation for lack of resources, but now in light of the amount of funds that we have we need to make sure that we develop a lot of our home grown talent. We have seen our Caymanian students — the Member for West Bay West mentioned Jazz [Pitcairn] earlier, we have seen what Frank E. Flowers and others have done, we have Eliandro Bodden coming up with a lot of these short videos. We have our own social media influencers, we have talent and we just need to make sure that we put resources to recognise that talent and promote that talent before we lose another one.

That's one observation I wanted to make and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the wide berth that you gave me. I appreciate it.

The Chairman: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Through you, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the member for doing that because that made my skin crawl. It's been years since I last heard that song, but certainly as you played it I recognise what it was.

You're absolutely right. One of the ways we are working to develop our young musicians and young talent is, the Member for West Bay West spoke about it, the development of the young folk singers. We are also working with Jason Gilbert in developing musicians as well. They performed at the folk singing concert and they did a fantastic job. We are behind that initiative, 110 per cent, supporting our talent.

I just want to end with this — when you can hear songs like, I'm so proud to be Caymanian by Vashti, I just want every single person to listen to that song tonight. Listen to the words of that song.

The Chairman: Lady Member for George Town West.

Hon. Pearlina L. McGaw-Lumsden, Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, in the interest of time and me being nice to you, I'm more than happy to do a block vote and I will take my question to the Minister, offline.

BLOCK VOTE:

**MUS 4, MUS 5, MUS 6, NCF 1, NCF 2, NCF 3,
NCF 4, NCF 5, NGS 59
TP 107, EI 23, EI 47, EI 72, EI 86**

The Chairman: That being said, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 83(3), I put the question as to whether honourable members approve the remaining items on the Schedule to be part of the Bill as follows —

- MUS 4 - Collection and Preservation of Significant Material Evidence in the amount of \$174,859 in 2026 and \$174,859 in 2027;

- MUS 5 - Museum Facilities, Exhibitions and Displays, \$681,629 in 2026 and \$681,629 in 2027;
- MUS 6 - Services to Support the Ministry, Cabinet and Other Departments, \$155,432 in 2026 and \$155,432 in 2027;
- NCF 1 - Arts and Cultural Preservation, Documentation and Promotion, \$247,613 in 2026 and \$217,613 in 2027;
- NCF 2 - Cultural Festivals, International Cultural Presentations, and Local Cultural Partnerships, \$330,539 in 2026 and \$365,539 in 2027;
- NCF 3 - Management of Operations and Maintenance of FJ Harquail Cultural Centre, \$453,612 in 2026 and \$453,612 in 2027;
- NCF 4 - Training and Support for Artistic Development, \$149,722 in 2026 and \$149,722 in 2027;
- NCF 5 - Youth Arts Programming, \$218,764 in 2026 and \$218,764 in 2027;
- NGS 59 - Youth Development Programmes, \$51,000 in 2026 and \$51,000 in 2027;
- TP 107 - Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage Programmes, \$350,000 in 2026 and \$350,000 in 2027;
- EI 23 - Cayman Islands National Museum, \$600,000 in 2026 and \$400,000 in 2027;
- EI 47 - National Gallery of the Cayman Islands, \$120,000 in 2026 and \$125,000 in 2027;
- EI 72 - Cayman National Cultural Foundation, \$336,000 in 2026 and \$326,000 in 2027; and
- EI 86 - Ministry of Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage, \$4,355,000 in 2026 and \$6,130,000 in 2027.

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

AYES.

The Chairman: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: MUS 4, MUS 5, MUS 6, NCF1, NCF 2, NCF 3, NCF 4, NCF 5, NGS 59, TP 107, EI 23, EI 47, EI 72 and EI 86 passed.

The Chairman: This concludes all of the Appropriations to the Honourable Minister for Youth, Sports, Culture and Heritage.

Minister, do you want to give a small closing statement because I think you have a few faithful warriors still here supporting you.

Hon. Isaac D. Rankine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, I would like to thank my team. This is the other part of the A-plus team that I have. They do a lot of hard work. You can see especially by what was done this weekend with Pirates Week and trying to put it back

on the right path, getting it to what it was before and getting our people out and making it a wholesome family event, except for one or two items this week that were not kosher.

I again want to thank Chief Officer Echenique; DCO, Dr. Watler; Mr. Petit; Ms. Melissa; and Acting DCO, Ms. Ventisha. They have worked extremely hard over the last 11 months almost, and I want to thank them again publicly for all the hard work they have done.

The Chairman: Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Members, this concludes the agenda items that we had set down for today. It leaves me to, at this very late hour, break with protocol slightly, but I'm sure all members will approve in me wishing my father a happy 82nd birthday today.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: I told him if members were kind, I'd get to see him, so it's you all's fault I didn't get to see him.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: In all seriousness, I do wish him a happy birthday and that he lives to see many more.

This then concludes proceedings of Finance Committee for today and we will commence at 10 a.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, 18th November, 2025.

At 10:14pm the Committee suspended until 10am Tuesday, 18th November, 2025.